THE ROOF

JOHN GALSWORTHY

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THE ROOF

THE WORKS OF
JOHN GALSWORTHY

NOVELS

VILLA RUBEIN: AND OTHER STORIES
THE ISLAND PHARISEES
THE MAN OF PROPERTY
THE COUNTRY HOUSE
FRATERNITY
THE PATRICIAN
THE DARK FLOWER
THE FREELANDS
BEYOND
FIVE TALES
SAINTS' PROGRESS
IN CHANCERY
TO LET
THE WHITE MONKEY
THE SILVER SPOON
SWAN SONG

THE FORSYTE SAGA
CARAVAN
A MODERN COMEDY

STORIES AND STUDIES

A COMMENTARY
A MOTLEY
THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY
THE LITTLE MAN
A SHEAF
ANOTHER SHEAF
TATTERDEMALION
CAPTURES
CASTLES IN SPAIN

POEMS

MOODS, SONGS AND DOGGERELS
VERSES NEW AND OLD

MEMORIES (ILLUSTRATED)
AWAKENING (ILLUSTRATED)

PLAYS

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	JOY
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SECOND SERIES :	THE ELDEST SON
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FIFTH SERIES :	A FAMILY MAN
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SEVENTH SERIES :	ESCAPE
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SIX SHORT PLAYS :	THE FIRST AND THE LAST
	THE LITTLE MAN
	HALL-MARKED
	DEFEAT
	THE SUN
	PUNCH AND GO

COLLECTED PLAYS: ONE VOLUME

THE ROOF

A PLAY IN SEVEN SCENES

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

DUCKWORTH

3 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.2

All applications respecting amateur performances of John Galsworthy's plays must be made to
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The Scene is a little old-fashioned hotel in Paris.

The action of the play passes between midnight and one o'clock of a summer night.

The first six scenes are played (one after the other) during the same first half of this time ; and the last scene in the last half thereof.

The action starts on the ground floor (Scene I). The second scene is played on the first floor ; the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth scenes on the second floor. The final scene is played on the roof.

NOTE ON THE SCENERY

Except for the last scene the walls of the various scenes need no change, save that in the first two scenes there is an entrance in the back wall, and that the partition wall —which divides off the service-room in Scene I—has to be removed for Scene II, and replaced (further in the room) for Scene III.

The two chief entr'actes should be made after Scene II, and again after Scene VI. Otherwise the intervals between the scenes should not exceed two minutes between Scenes I and II, and one minute between the bedroom scenes.

The window is in the same place (right-hand wall) in all the scenes.

The service-room in Scene I represents the space of the corridor in Scenes III, IV, V, and VI, so that the partition needs to be shifted inwards to form the wall of the bedrooms, leaving the corridor space to be represented by the service-room space in Scene I.

CHARACTERS

Gustave	An Old Waiter
The Hon. Reggie Fanning .	A Very Young Man
Major Moulteney . .	His Bear-Leader
Baker, Brice	Two Englishmen in Paris
Mr Beeton	An Elderly Englishman
Mrs Beeton	His Wife
Henry Lennox . . .	A Novelist
Evelyn Lennox . . .	His Wife
Diana, Bryn	Their Young Daughters
A Nurse	In Attendance on Lennox
A Young Man . . .	"Tony"
A Young Woman . . .	"Nell"
Froba	A Violinist
Two Pompiers . . .	French Firemen

CAST OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION, FIRST PRODUCED BY MR BASIL DEAN AT THE VAUDEVILLE THEATRE, LONDON, ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5th, 1929

Gustave	Mr Horace Hodges
The Hon. Reggie Fanning	Mr Frank Lawton
Major Moulteney	Mr Hesketh Pearson
Baker	Mr David Horne
Brice	Mr Eric Maturin
Mr Beeton	Mr Ben Field
Mrs Beeton	Miss Hilda Sims
Henry Lennox	Mr T. H. Roberts
Evelyn Lennox	Miss Cicely Byrne
Diana	Miss Peggy Simpson
Bryn	Miss Ann Casson
A Nurse	Miss Lydia Sherwood
A Young Man	Mr Eric Portman
A Young Woman	Miss Madeleine Carroll
Froba	Mr D. A. Clarke-Smith

Two Pompiers

SCENE 1

When the curtain rises GUSTAVE, *the waiter, a man of nearly sixty with an infinitely patient, lined, clean-shaven face, and a frequent faint smile, is laying tables. He moves to and from service-room to dining-room, setting two of the tables with cups and plates for next morning's café.*

NURSE. [*Watching him*] Twelve o'clock! Don't you get awfully tired, Gustave?

GUSTAVE. [*Inclining his ear towards her, in a patient, caressing voice*] Ye-es, Mees, a leetle tired; we 'ave no leeft, as you see.

NURSE. Well, *I* shan't want anything more now, thank you.

GUSTAVE. Tt-tt! [*Concerned*] A leetle fruit—rafraichi—veree cold.

He goes across to the serving-room.

NURSE. No, really. You sit down and rest.

GUSTAVE. [*Wheedling*] Veree nice. I 'ave it ready. [*He brings it.*]

NURSE. Delicious cooking here.

GUSTAVE. [*Bridling*] We 'ave a pride, Mees.

NURSE. Are you left here all alone at night?

GUSTAVE. With the night porter, ye-es, Mees.

NURSE. What time do you generally finish?

GUSTAVE. Meednight. Gentlemen want drinks—a leetle supper some time.

NURSE. [*Looking at clock*] Another hour! I feel for you, Gustave. I know what feet are!

GUSTAVE. Feet, Mademoiselle—oh! là-là! 'Ow I would like to take my feet off some time! Le Bon Dieu created man with four feet—not fair on the two which always carry 'eem.

Sound of men's voices in the corridor. Three men — REGGIE FANNING, *very young,* BAKER *and* BRICE, *getting on for forty, appear in the doorway. They all appear to have been revelling.*

FANNING. I shall go up to the poor, poor Major.

BRICE. Up—up—up—up!

BAKER. Private life for me.

BRICE. We want cocktails, we want cocktails!

GUSTAVE. Three Martinis, Sare? Veree dry—veree cold.

BAKER. Four, Gustave. Right!

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare.

He moves to prepare them at the table at the entrance of the service-room; the MEN *disperse down the corridor,* FANNING *to the Left; the other two to the Right.*

NURSE. That boy looks nice; pity he should go about like that.

GUSTAVE. In Paree, Mees, every one a leetle fresh.

NURSE. Yes, and why? You French are the steadiest people in the world.

GUSTAVE. [*Shaking cocktails*] Paree not France, Mees. In Paree good wine, good food. People come, they eat, they drink—suddenly their blood is surprised—it march.

NURSE. [*Smiling*] Excellent, Gustave; I believe you're perfectly right.

GUSTAVE. We 'ave a couple, numero douze—old people, veree comme il faut, veree sage. I watch them at dinner—at once they get red, their blood march.

NURSE. A Mr and Mrs Beeton—real stolid English. We English do seem stolid in Paris. Not my poor Mr Lennox, though—he's very ill, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. Such a nice gentleman—'ave such a nice face. And 'is leetle girls, so charmeeng, très gentilles.

NURSE. I'm terribly sorry for Mrs Lennox. I only hope they get back to England all right.

GUSTAVE. Poor ladee—she 'ave a look, always watching. [*Pouring out the cocktails*] We 'ave a love couple, too—veree different—young mariés, or [*Tolerantly*] perhaps not.

NURSE. Perhaps not? Why?

GUSTAVE. Veree moch in love.

NURSE. [*Sighing*] It *can* go together, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. In Paree—not always, Mees. Sometime they come to see 'ow it work. Sometime they come for a little rest from being married.

NURSE. Are they English these two?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Mees, 'igh society, as you call eet.

BAKER. [*Appearing in doorway, followed by* BRICE] Gustave, where those cocktails?

GUSTAVE *carries them to him on a tray.* Right! [*He drinks his off and hands one to* BRICE, *who tosses his off, too. Then, carrying the other two cocktails, they go off upstairs, rather noisily.*]

Enter FROBA, *a young violinist, with a Jugo-Slavian face, a lot of hair, and a somewhat hoarse, semi-Americanised voice.*

FROBA. Say, Waiter, I'm dry. Give me a long squashy lemon drink.

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Mister Froba. [*Begins to squeeze lemons.*]

FROBA. Say! Dose men are rader fresh. [*Seats himself at the table on the right in a line with the nurse*] How's de sick gentleman, Nurse?

NURSE. He's not yet got over his journey from Nauheim.

FROBA. What's his trouble? Heart?

NURSE. Yes.

FROBA. Is dat so? Dey admire his books in Amurrica. He's kind of a big bug dere. [*The contrast between his speech and his rather spiritual face is intriguing.*]

NURSE. In spite of his being English?

FROBA. Why! Dey're crazy about antiques.

NURSE. I'm told his novels are delightful.

FROBA. Sure, dey are! He's got a soul, dat man. Say, Nurse—in a hundred human beings, how many have got souls?

NURSE. It's difficult to say. [*Smiling*] So many people keep their souls locked up.

FROBA. I get you; and take dem walks once a week, but not on Sundays.

NURSE. It's like the weekly bath of old days.

FROBA. Say, have you noticed dere's more baths,

and more automobiles, and fewer souls in Amurrica dan anywheres ?

NURSE. I've never been in America. But I expect the souls are in the bottom drawer all right.

FROBA. Well, I'm telling you—I've been in Amurrica ten years. Dey wash so much, and dey move around so ; it dakes quite an occasion to make dem open de bottom drawer.

NURSE. A little soul goes a long way, Mr Froba. Just as well to keep them for Bank holidays.

FROBA. Well, when I play at my concerts, I look at all dose faces, and if I see a soul it kind of goes to my head. I make quite a noise playing to it.

GUSTAVE. [*Bringing him the drink*] Veree long, Sare ; veree cold.

FROBA. Gustave, you're a man and a broder, and you, sure, have a soul.

GUSTAVE. Ah ! De soul. Each wine 'ave its bouquet.

FROBA. I must go now—practice for my concert.

BRICE *and* FANNING *enter, chanting as they come to the tune of* " *Old Man River* " :

" We want drinks, we want drinks,
We want 'em cold, we want 'em long—
Make no mistake we want 'em strong—
And don't you get the mixing wrong—
We want drinks."

FANNING. [*Halting at sight of the* NURSE] We beg your pardon. [*To* GUSTAVE] Could you get us two whiskies and sodas ?

GUSTAVE. Black and White, Sare—veree Scotch, veree strong.

FANNING. [*Weakly*] Ve'y Scotch, ve'y strong; Mr Brice, that's a *mot*, if you know what I mean.

GUSTAVE. [*Bringing bottle and syphon to table at the back, bottle in hand*] Say ven, Sare?

BRICE. Never say "when," never say "when"!

FANNING. [*To* GUSTAVE] I leave it to you to give me what you think is pup-proper.

GUSTAVE. [*Patiently to* FANNING] One fingare, Sare? [*A bell rings in the service-room.*]

BRICE. Put it down. We'll fix it.

GUSTAVE marks with his eye the height of the whisky in the bottle and goes out to answer the bell.

The two attend to the adjustment of their drinks.

FROBA. I guess dey've lost de keys of *deir* bottom drawers.

NURSE. You never know, Mr Froba. The soul has a way of coming out under pressure.

FROBA. Well, I judge *you* get a chance to see it pressed.

He turns to stare at the young man, who is looking, rather fascinated, at the back of the NURSE'S *head.*

FANNING. [*Half seas over*] I beg your pardon, Nurse, but could you take my temperachure? I feel so—so hot.

NURSE. [*Turning, startled*] I've no thermometer, here. [*Looking at him steadily*] But I can tell you

exactly what you want. No more whisky and a good long sleep.

FANNING. [*Grave and considerate*] Oh! do you think so? Thank you ve'y much. As a matter of fact, I believe you're pup-perfectly right.

NURSE. [*Getting up*] I'm sure I am. Good-night.

She goes. FROBA *gets up too and follows her out.*

GUSTAVE *comes back and prepares a tray, with caviare, some bread, some olives, and a bottle of Chateau d'Yquem; and presently goes out with it.*

FANNING. That was ve'y quick diag-diagnosis, Mister Brice. She's a ve'y nice woman, I should think. I like her face, and I like her voice.

BRICE. Ho, ho! Don't you try to get off with that nurse, young man.

FANNING. Mister Brice, you may think you are funny, but you are not.

BRICE. [*Whistling*] Keep it on! Keep it on, my lad!

FANNING. I am not your lad, and I thank God for it.

BRICE. I say! Don't get ratty!

FANNING. You seem to think that I have a low opinion of women, like your own.

BRICE. I should say you've got no opinion of women at all. Never seen one, have you—except your mother and your nurse?

FANNING. I shall be obliged if you will not be insulting.

BRICE. Well, then [*Grinning*], let's hear your adventures with women.

FANNING. No gentleman ever talks about his adventures with women.

BRICE. Not when he's had none.

FANNING. Mister Brice, please consider yourself a stranger to me.

BRICE. Look here, young man, d'you want some advice? You've been brought up at home, I'm told. You're just ten years below your proper age. When I was your age——

FANNING. I don't care a hoo-hoot what happened when you were my age.

BRICE. That's lucky, because I'm not going to tell you. But if you think that because you've been brought up with cotton-wool in your ears, you can criticise men of the world, you're ruddy well mistaken.

FANNING. [*Finishing his drink and staring at* BRICE *in a prolonged manner*] Mister Brice, I excuse you because you are drunk.

GUSTAVE *returns.*

I leave this gentleman, if he can be called a gentleman, in your cus-custody. I am going up.

BRICE. Up—up—up—up!

FANNING *looks at him with inebriated haughtiness and goes out.*

Young pup, pup, pup!

GUSTAVE. [*Quietly*] Excuse, Sare. Not right to make so young gentlemen drunk.

BRICE. Heh! [*Staring*] What—what the deuce are you butting in for?

GUSTAVE. No, Sare. A nice young man—not a strong 'ead.

BRICE. Why didn't you refuse to serve him, then, eh ?

GUSTAVE. Not my place to refuse, Sare.

BRICE. Nor is it your place to tell me what I ought to do. Darned impudence, Waiter, darned impudence !

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare. But when gentlemen 'ave some drink on board, as you say—not careful. Onlee a boy—a peetee.

BRICE. Look here, my careful friend, are you suggesting that I'm d-drunk, myself ?

GUSTAVE. Not yet, Sare.

BRICE. Oh ! not yet ! Well, I'm damned !

GUSTAVE. No, Sare, only a leetle fresh.

BRICE. [*Staring at him*] I shall darned well complain to your manager.

GUSTAVE. [*With his faint smile*] Manager 'ave gone for the night, Sare. Onlee myself 'ere ! To-morrow, not complain—cold feet, Sare. Perhaps not remembare.

BRICE. Don't you bet on that ! I've a dashed good memory. [*He finishes his drink and pours out some more whisky*] Do they pay y' extra for givin' unpleasant advice in this establishment ?

GUSTAVE. [*Deprecating*] Veree sorree, Sare—'ave no weesh to offend you.

BRICE. Well, you have. You French think you're everybody, and I—I don't give a kick for the lot of you.

GUSTAVE. [*Ironically*] We are desolate, Monsieur. [*A bell rings and he looks at the board.*]

BRICE. You will be when I've done with you. [*Returning to his first grievance*] Silly young cuckoo! I'm not his keeper.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare, the Major 'is keeper—veree nice man—veree quiet.

BRICE. Meaning I'm neither. H'm! Didn't you hear that bell?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare—just attending to see if you 'ave feenished with me.

BRICE. [*Grinning*] Finished with you? Not I. Not by a long chalk. You wait and see.

GUSTAVE. [*With his faint smile*] Yes, Sare, the bull-dogue 'e 'old on.

BRICE. You bet he does. You've got your trouble comin' to you, my friend.

GUSTAVE. Excuse, Sare. I go now.

He goes to answer the bell.

BRICE, *left alone, glares after him, and finishes his whisky.*

BRICE. Old dotard! [*A slow grin spreads over his face*] I'll make him sit up, up, up!

The NURSE *enters busily and goes towards the service-room, where she looks for something on the shelves.* BRICE *gets up and goes to the entrance of the service-room.*

BRICE. Are you looking for anything? Can I h-help you loo-look?

NURSE. No, thanks; I just want some cold consommé. Oh! there it is! [*Takes down a basin of con-*

sommé from the top shelf, and begins to prepare a little tray with a cup of it, biscuits, etc.]

BRICE. That old waiter is an of-offensive ass.

NURSE. Oh! Do you think so? *I* think he's a dear. What makes you say he's offensive?

BRICE. Because he gives advice. He's not my grea— great-grandmother. [*Laughs inanely*] All people are offensive when they give advice. Don't you agree with me?

NURSE. It depends on the people, and the advice.

BRICE. I—I don't say I wouldn't take advice from the Archbishop of Canterbury. But—a waiter! I mean to say— What!

NURSE. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——

BRICE. Babes and sucklings! I'm not fond of babes and sucklings. [*Laughs*] I don't mind telling you, Nurse, I'm going to give that old waiter a jolly good jolt.

NURSE. [*Coming out with tray, which she deposits on table*] Don't you think you'd better sleep on it?

BRICE *has stepped into the service-room and stands looking at the back of it.*

BRICE. Not on your life! I've just had an i-idea.

NURSE. [*Sharply*] I should keep it, and have it stuffed. [BRICE *suddenly utters a crow.*]

NURSE. [*Startled*] Is anything the matter with you?

BRICE. [*Turning to her*] Take it from me, it's a magnificent idea. [*Laughs.*]

NURSE. Really! I've known so many magnificent ideas asking for soda-water the next morning. [*She takes up the tray.*]

BRICE *follows her, and as she disappears shouts at the top of his voice:* "*We want cocktails, we want cocktails,*" *then suddenly covers his lips, saying:* "*H'ssh!*" *laughs inanely and goes back to the service-room, where he disappears in its back recesses.*

While he is engaged there in whatever he is engaged in, the faint sounds of a violin playing a tango steal into the hush. After about a minute BRICE *comes back into the open, snapping his fingers and drunkenly pleased with himself.*

BRICE. That's all right—! I've got back on the old swine. That'll shake 'im up. That'll give him the twice over. Ha, ha, ha!

He goes to his table and pours himself out some more whisky.

GUSTAVE *re-enters.*

BRICE. Oh! here you are again! Just in time.

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare.

BRICE. Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

GUSTAVE. Excuse, Sare?

But BRICE *continues to laugh, and goes out. He can be heard calling inanely,* "*Up—up—up—up,*" *as he mounts the stairs.*

GUSTAVE. [*Measuring the whisky, which is nearly gone*] Oh! Là! Quel sale type! [*He sits down on the chair by the service-room*] Mon Dieu! Que j' suis

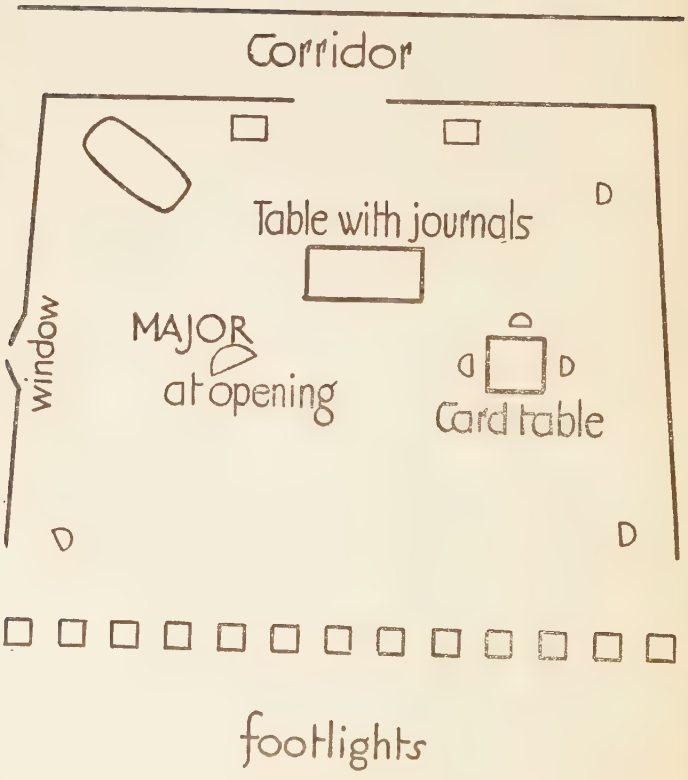
fatigué ! [*He sits there with his head on his hands, when suddenly he raises his nose and sniffs*] Qué qu'il ya ? [*He starts up*] Cré nom de Dieu ! Qu'y a-t-il ! [*He dashes into the service-room*] Oh ! Là, là !

Returning into the dining-room and running to the Entry : " Pierre ! Pierre ! Vite ! Vite ! Allez chercher les—— !"

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

SCENE II


Corridor
Table with journals
D
MAJOR
at opening
window
D
D
D
Card table
footlights

SCENE II

FIRST FLOOR

The Same Evening: Midnight

The Lounge of the little hotel, occupying the whole of the stage. Chairs, settees, and a card-table. The window, uncurtained, on the Right, looks out on to a little French Square. A wide doorway Back, with curtains looped, to the stairway. A clock points to twelve.

MAJOR MOULTENEY, *a shrewd quiet man of fifty, in dinner jacket, is sitting in an arm-chair finishing a cigar and looking at a copy of "La Vie Parisienne."*

MOULTENEY. [*Yawning*] Oh-h! Twelve o'clock! Darn it! [*Cheerful sounds are heard*] That sounds like him.

Young FANNING *appears.*

MOULTENEY. [*Looking up*] Hallo, Reggie! Where are your boon companions?

FANNING. [*Making a motion as if hitting a ball with a racquet*] Coming up—up—up—very boon, Major. [*Halting at "La Vie Parisienne"*] *La Vie Parisienne!* Major! That is not a pup-proper pup-periodical.

[*He takes it from the* MAJOR'S *hands. The* MAJOR *grins up at him.*]

MOULTENEY. Strikes me, young man, you've been wetting your whistle.

FANNING. Not enough to matter, Major. Whenever I was tempted I thought of you sitting here, and I said to myself—must set an example to the Major. Besides, Mr Baker's going to teach me poker.

MOULTENEY. He can teach you, but he's not going to play with you.

FANNING. Why not ?

MOULTENEY. My dear boy, poker's an art—you don't learn it in an evening.

FANNING. But he says it's so simple. He's a very good egg, Major.

MOULTENEY. [*Drily*] I've no doubt.

FANNING. Brice, his friend, is not quite such a good egg, in my opinion. [*Sounds of revelry below.*]

MOULTENEY. They're noisy beggars, anyway.

FANNING. Noisy but nice, Major.

Dropping "La Vie Parisienne" and moving towards the doorway as the figure of a YOUNG MAN *in evening dress with a hat and overcoat over his arm appears in it.*

Hallo !

YOUNG MAN. [*After a moment's hesitation and a jerky movement as if to cover his face with his hat*] Hallo, Fanning ! You staying here ?

FANNING. Yes, I'm staying here ; are you ?

YOUNG MAN. Perching—off to-morrow. What's brought you to Paris ?

FANNING. Oh ! only getting ready for the jolly old Guards.

YOUNG MAN. Oh ! yes, you're going into the Guards ? Um !

FANNING. Round the world first—aren't we, Major ? Going to shoot big game. This is my m-mentor, Major Moulteney. [*Turns to the* MAJOR] Major, this is——

YOUNG MAN. How d'you do ? Sorry, I've got to go. Good-night ! [*He slips away abruptly.*

FANNING. That was Tony— [*Waving his hands slightly*] Can't remember his other name ! Met him in a country house. Have you noticed, Major, how people leave their surnames about in country houses. But I remember his profession, he's a polo-playing poet.

MOULTENEY. H'm ! That sounds a new form of trouble.

FANNING. He plays a very good game ; and his poetry's remarkable—I haven't read it. I say—poetry, polo, poker ! Sounds like the whole duty of man. Why don't you teach me poker yourself, Major ?

MOULTENEY. Not in my contract, Reggie. Your mother'd have a fit.

FANNING. Oh ! Mother. She throws a fit if I blow my old nose. You know, the extraordinary thing is, Major, somebody told me—my mother was wild in her youth.

MOULTENEY. Lady Ilfracombe! [*Shakes his head*] Not wild, Reggie—no—merely unmanageable.

With sounds of revelry BAKER *and* BRICE *appear arm-in-arm in the doorway. Each holds a cocktail in the off hand.*

FANNING. Hallo! Here they are, booner than ever, Major.

BAKER. Reggie, cocktail for you [*Hands cocktail*]. Major, cocktail for you [BRICE *hands the* MAJOR *a cocktail*]. Right! The old waiter makes 'em well. He's a character.

FANNING. Mr Baker, you were going to teach me poker.

BAKER. Right! Brice? Got some cards?

BRICE. What d'you take me for—a conjuror? [*Produces a pack from his pocket*] So I am. Splendid!

BAKER. [*Taking them*] Right! [*He sits at the card-table*] Now, what games do you know, young man? Old Maid? Beggar-my-Neighbour? Patience?

FANNING. [*With difficulty*] No, I only know Bridge.

BAKER. Well, in poker the great thing is to have a cooler head than the other fellows.

FANNING. I don't know if I have this evening.

BRICE. Hear, hear! [*He and* FANNING *are standing by the table; the* MAJOR *gets up too, to watch.*]

BAKER. And a face you can take off. See! [*His face becomes mask-like with a slightly japing look, then returns to normal*] Right!

FANNING. That's very interesting!

BAKER. That's for the bluff! When you've bluffed,

remember to look as if you hadn't. And when you haven't bluffed, to look as if you had! See?

FANNING. That's terribly interesting. I—I'll practise in a looking-glass. I'll certainly practise in a loo—looking-glass.

BAKER. Right! Now for the double cross. *Attention*! [*But* FANNING, *who has drunk his cocktail, has a vacant air.*]

FANNING. What—what double cross?

BAKER. You're goin' to see. Watch my face!

FANNING. If you'll excuse me, I'd rather not. I'm so thirsty. Could I have a real drink?

BRICE. [*Linking his arm*] We want drinks, we want drinks!

He and FANNING *go out, chanting to the tune of "Old Man River."*

BAKER. Major, that young man is a proposition—greener than I ever thought to see a boy again.

MOULTENEY. He's never been away from home—neither school, nor college. Got a mother.

BAKER. Ho! Great mistake, mothers!

MOULTENEY. Great mistake, *his* mother.

BAKER. Well, the French all have mothers, and the boys live at home, but they don't stay green like that. What you going to do about it?

MOULTENEY. [*Shaking his head*] Don't know. Keep him *integer vitae* if I can.

BAKER. *Scelerisque purus*? What! He wanted to get off to-night. Saw a girl for the first time.

MOULTENEY. Thanks for stopping him. He's not

at all a bad boy just an un-blooded pup, that's all.

BAKER. What's your scheme ?

MOULTENEY. Get him down to Africa.

BAKER. Shooting and so on. Right !

MOULTENEY. I made a mistake to stop in Paris. I hate Paris, anyway.

BAKER. Take my tip ! Let him get properly drunk, Major.

GUSTAVE, *who is seen without on his way upstairs, pauses.*

GUSTAVE. [*In entrance, thinking himself addressed*] Sare ?

BAKER. Not you, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare. [*He passes on.*]

MOULTENEY. [*With a smile*] Drunk ? Why ?

BAKER. Next morning. Remember your first drunk ? Pleasant ?

MOULTENEY. Horrid !

BAKER. First woman—that's different. First gamble—all depends. But first drunk's a cert.

MOULTENEY. The real trouble is that he plays no games.

BAKER. Ah ! A boy's got to play games, or he'll take it out in "life." Funny word "life," Major.

MOULTENEY. Very. In the big sense very fine.

BAKER. Right ! Hated bein' in the war, but never regretted it since, and never want it again.

MOULTENEY. No, by George !

BAKER. Once find out that you can stand fire,

and you don't want any more fire. What! [*Getting up*] First-rate cooking here, Major. Funny little hole—very French.

FANNING *appears ornamentally inebriated.*

BAKER. [*Sotto voce*] Drunk! Right!

MOULTENEY. Reggie, bed for us, I think.

FANNING. [*Cheerful and exhilarated*] Bed! That's just what the nurse said, Major. I asked her to take my temperachure, and she said—she nevah took strange temperachures. At least she practically said that, because she's a nice woman. Mr Brice and I have had a row about her. I was obliged to leave him in charge of the old waiter. Have you notished the old waiter—he's an early Victorian. Shall we ask him for some nishe drinks? [*Laughs.*]

MOULTENEY. No more drinks for you, Reggie.

FANNING. No more drinks? Why? What did we come to Parish for? We haven't even danced. Mister Baker, will you give me the pleasure of a dansh?

MOULTENEY. Sit down, Reggie, and don't play the fool.

FANNING. [*Sitting down and contemplating the* MAJOR *anxiously*] Major, do you sus-suspect me? Mister Baker, how many drinks did we have?

BAKER. Three, I guess.

FANNING. And two makes five. And six—the one I want.

MOULTENEY. And won't get.

FANNING. [*Solemnly*] Major, you and Mister Baker have both been drunk many times.

BAKER. We have—have we, Major?

FANNING. Ve'y well. I never have, so that even if I'm drunk now, I'm shtill a lot of holes down.

MOULTENEY. Neither Mr Baker nor myself are proud of having been drunk.

BAKER. Not too fearfully.

FANNING. I should like to argue that point, Major. I feel that if you had never been drunk, you wouldn't know what it felt like, and that would be a losh to you. You wouldn't be the men you are, would you ?

MOULTENEY. Which way are we to take that, Baker ?

FANNING. Major, isn't the duty of man to be a man, a whole man, and nothing but a man ? But are you nothing but a man if you've never been drunk ? Excuse my logic.

MOULTENEY. All puppies eat muck, till they learn better.

FANNING. [*Triumphantly*] Eggsactly ! I'm quite 'ware of being a pup-puppy. [*Very earnestly*] But I want to say that—[*Wanders*] er—er—oh ! I know. [*Smiles blandly*] Mister Baker, I was brought up ve'y strictly, and I want to tell you about it.

BAKER. [*Interested*] Right !

FANNING. I think it may be a lesson to the Major.

MOULTENEY. Oh ! you do ?

FANNING. Yes. [*Earnestly*] You see, I've got an inferirority complexsh—if y'know what I mean.

MOULTENEY. Don't be an ass, Reggie.

FANNING. Not at all ! I feel I have to wipe out my mothersh apron-shtrings.

BAKER. Very natural!

FANNING. [*Gratefully*] Thank you! Don't misunderstand me—I'm not saying anything against my mother. She's a wonderful woman, Mister Baker—full of good works. I—I'm one of her good works. [*He smiles pleasantly and goes into a sort of dream.*]

BAKER. [*Aside*] He's O.K., Major.

FANNING. [*Coming out of his dream*] Not at all! That's where you make a mistake. Who knows whether I'm O.K.? [*Again goes into his dream.*]

BAKER. [*Aside to the* MAJOR] Not as drunk as we thought. [MOULTENEY *nods.*

FANNING. Who knows—if I don't know; an' what I mean to say is: How am I to know? I've always been so beautifully looked after. Nothing's ever happened to me.

BAKER. [*Sotto voce*] Kid's right.

MOULTENEY. That'll cure itself fast enough, Reggie.

FANNING. [*Shaking his head solemnly*] No, not fast enough—if you'll excuse me—lots of arrears to make up. I d-don't know even whether I'm a cak-coward.

MOULTENEY. Of course you're not.

FANNING. [*Blandly*] Why do you say that?

MOULTENEY. No decently bred chap is.

FANNING. Excuse me, Major, tha's not logic, it's an assumption. I don't know if I can take my liquor like a—a sportsman.

BAKER. That's a matter of practice.

Shout from below: "We want cocktails, we want cocktails!" is heard.

FANNING. Mister Baker, you're ve'y sympathetic.

But I—I don't even know whether I can lose my money pup-properly.

BAKER. Can you stick to it properly ?

FANNING. Excuse me, that isn't part of the education of a sportsman. Then again : I don't know whether I can make love, if you'll forgive my mentioning such a thing.

MOULTENEY. You'll know as soon as ever you need.

FANNING. There speaks my mother. That is my difficulty, Major, if you don't mind my saying so. My mother is always speaking.

Enter GUSTAVE.

GUSTAVE. You want cocktails, Sare !

MOULTENEY. *I* don't.

FANNING. Mushtn't dishappoint him. He—he might die of disappointment.

MOULTENEY. Stop it, Reggie—you've had too much. [*To* GUSTAVE] No, thanks.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare. [*He goes.*

FANNING. You see, Major, it isn't so much that I want to be a bad lad, as that I want to know what sort of bad lad I should be.

MOULTENEY. I quite see, old man.

FANNING. I thought you would ; I have a great respect for you, Major.

MOULTENEY. [*Grinning*] When you're squiffy.

FANNING. No, no—not—not only then. Sometimes I have a great respect for you when I'm sober. But sometimes I think you are too conshi-onshi-enshi-us, if you follow me,

MOULTENEY. Quite, Reggie!

FANNING. [*Taking the* MAJOR'S *hand*] Thank you ve'y much, Major. You see, I've got to become a *m-man*, if you know what I mean.

BAKER. That's settled.

BRICE *appears from the stairs; his hair is standing up; he looks rather drunk, and professionally funny, as if he had done something clever. He begins at once to chant: "We wants beds! we want beds!" in which chant* FANNING *automatically joins.*

MOULTENEY. Shut up, Reggie, you'll wake people. If there's a nurse here, there must be somebody ill.

FANNING. [*Stopping*] Oh! I never thought of that—how ve'y inconshiderate of me!

BRICE. We want——

BAKER. [*To* BRICE] Dry up!

BRICE. That old waiter's goin' to get surprise of his life. [*He laughs inanely.*]

FANNING. [*Seriously to the* MAJOR] Do you think I ought to go an' apologise to the nurse, Major?

BRICE. [*Crowing*] Young r-rip!

BAKER. Chuck it, Brice!

FANNING. Mister Brice, I am sorry to say that I cannot consider you a proper person to associate with the Major.

BRICE. You young pup!

MOULTENEY. Kennel up, Reggie! You've had too much and you know it.

FANNING. [*With dignity*] In that case, will you excuse me if I blood Mister Brice's nose.

BRICE [*Laughing and squaring up*] Try it, my boy! Try it!

As he speaks, GUSTAVE *appears between the curtains, his figure is distraught and his hands raised.*

GUSTAVE. Messieurs! Ze 'ouse burn!

MOULTENEY. What!

GUSTAVE. I send de porter to call de engines.

MOULTENEY. [*Sharply*] What's that?

GUSTAVE. Fire! Beeg fire! It spread! It catch de stair.

MOULTENEY. Where? How?

BRICE *turns suddenly to* GUSTAVE *who is staring at him. His mouth falls open, he makes a gesture of dazed appeal.*

GUSTAVE. [*Responding to that appeal*] I not know, Sare. Come queeck!

He goes out, followed by the Major. BRICE *subsides into a chair.*

BAKER. Here! Get up, Brice! Young Fanning, pull yourself together!

The MAJOR'S *voice is heard shouting up the stairs.*

MAJOR. Baker! Baker! Telephone for the engines. Sharp!

BAKER. Right! [*He goes to the telephone and rapidly calls up the fire station*] Caserne d'incendie, caserne—de pompiers. Si! Il y a incendie. Si, si! Vite! Il parait que ce'st grave.

The MAJOR'S *voice:* "*Water, you fellows! It's caught the stairs!*" FANNING *seizes a bottle of water on a table, then puts it down.*

FANNING. That's no good.

BAKER. [*Who has finished telephoning*] Come on, boys, bathroom, cans.

He runs out. FANNING, *with a visible effort, pulls himself together, and follows. There is a sound of metal clanging, of water swishing.* BRICE *jumps up and runs out with the hoarse cry;* "*We want water!*"

The stage is empty, and suddenly the light goes out; figures pass dimly in the corridor with cans. The MAJOR'S *voice is heard.*

MAJOR. Steady, Reggie! Good man! That's the stuff! Baker, pull down those curtains!

BAKER. [*Appearing, dim, in the doorway*] Right! [*He pulls the curtain down.*]

MOULTENEY. [*Appearing in the dim light*] It's burning like hell. We'll try and stop it here. Make a line—pass the cans. You, waiter, go and rouse people, send 'em on the roof! Stand by, Reggie! Good man! Now, line along!

FANNING. I say, Mr Baker, it's—it's providential, isn't it!

BAKER. Right! Now's the time to show your mettle.

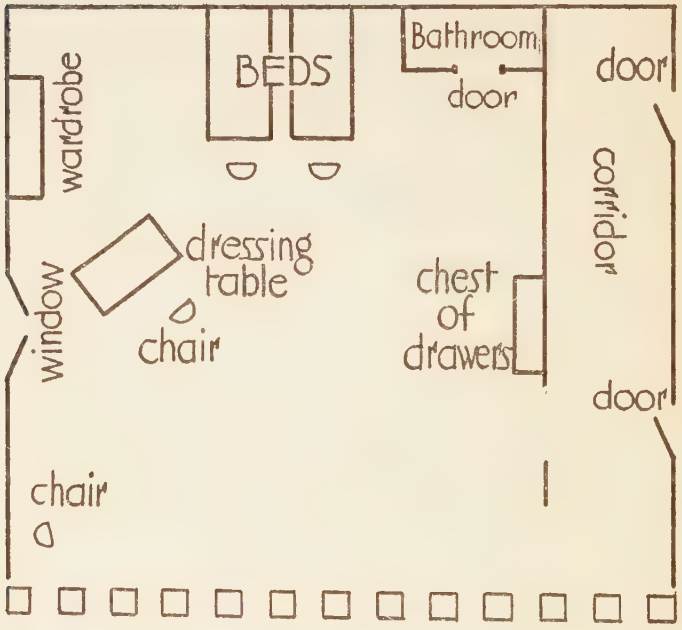
FANNING. Rather!

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE III

SCENES III IV V VI

with necessary changes of furniture and apparel



SCENE III

SECOND FLOOR

The Same Evening : Midnight

A bedroom with bathroom carved out of it on the left, and a door below the bathroom into a visible corridor. A bedroom, momentarily filled, as one may say, by the lively forms of two GIRLS *of thirteen and twelve, in pyjamas, pillow-fighting.*

As the curtain rises the skirmish ceases, and the eldest, DIANA, *takes a flying leap on to her bed and plumps down cross-legged.*

DIANA. Pax, Bryn !

BRYN. Pig ! You've pulled out three hairs. Look ! [*Holds them out.*]

DIANA. We can stick them in again. Mum's got some seccotine. [*Giggles*] Have you wound your watch ?

BRYN. No. [*Putting it to her ear*] It's stopped, Di.

DIANA. Put it to twelve. It's striking ! Hallo ! Listen ! Open the door, Bryn.

BRYN *opens the door. The sound of a violin playing a Leclair Tambourin comes in.*

[*Under her breath*] I say ! Isn't it topping ?

Both listen with all their ears. The player reaches the end, and there is silence.

BRYN. Shall I go up and ask if he'd like us in to hear him. They love audiences, you know. It's all rot when they pretend they don't.

DIANA. You can't in pys.

BRYN. Why not ?

DIANA. [*Flying up and grabbing her*] We don't know him.

BRYN. He wouldn't mind, Di.

DIANA. No, Bryn, you can't. Besides, I bet he doesn't wash his head.

BRYN. [*Wide-eyed*] Really ?

DIANA. Musicians don't.

BRYN. How d'you know ?

DIANA. It takes the gloss off. That one at Nauheim *never* washed—I simply know he didn't.

BRYN. This one washes his ears anyway.

DIANA. He hasn't got any.

BRYN. I saw part of *one*.

DIANA. Nobody could see through all that hair. You do tell whackers, Bryn.

BRYN. [*Looking out of the door*] Here he is, Di, coming down. I dare you to ask him if he washes his head.

DIANA. Bryn—if you—— !

BRYN. [*To* FROBA *passing in the corridor*] Oh ! Do come in, my sister wants to ask you something ?

DIANA. [*Under her breath*] You little toad !

FROBA. [*Moving into the doorway*] Ye-es ? What is it ?

DIANA. [*Recoiling*] Oh ! Do you like Paris ?

FROBA. Well ! I judge it's some town.

DIANA. Yes, we judge that, too.

FROBA. I guess quite some people do. You're a bit in the bud to see life in Paris. What have you seen anyway ?

DIANA. Oh ! the Louvre you know, and Notre Dame.

BRYN. And the Madeleine.

FROBA. Heu ! You are go-getters.

BRYN. What is a go-getter ?

FROBA. Kind of an early bird—go gets the worm.

BRYN. [*Coldly*] We don't like worms.

FROBA. In Paris the worms are extra-special. Is that all you want to ask me ?

DIANA. Y-yes. Thank you !

FROBA. Heu ! Den I'll go get my drink. Say, you look cunning in dose pajamas.

The children make faces as he goes out and away down the corridor.

BRYN. [*Shutting the door*] You *are* a funk, Di. [*Going across to the window*] You see he was quite used to pyjamas. What can we do now ?

DIANA. Yes, I'm not a bit sleepy.

BRYN. I've got a hunch. Those two old things next door—let's tap like the prisoners in Dad's novel—the one we're not allowed to read.

DIANA. Now, that's what I call sensible. They're stuffy old things.

BRYN. We must do it properly, Di. You say over the alphabet and I'll do the tapping. [*They crouch on the beds against the wall*] What shall I tap with ?

DIANA. I'll get the odol bottle.

Gets it from the bathroom.

BRYN. They always ask each other's names first.

DIANA. Yes, but we know theirs—it's Beeton.

BRYN. Let's start with S.O.S. then.

DIANA. It's an awful strain getting the alphabet right every time. Ready? [*As she says the alphabet over to S,* BRYN *taps*] Stop! Now for O. [*Says alphabet to O.* BRYN *taps once too often.*]

BRYN. Oh! Di! I over-tapped. They've got P.

DIANA. Well, what begins with S.P.?

BRYN. Spot! Sport! Spillikins.

DIANA. I know, Starting Price. Only that doesn't seem to lead to anything. We'll have to begin again. Let's try: Are you there? A. [BRYN *taps once*] Now R. [*Begins alphabet to which* BRYN *taps when a resounding knock on the wall breaks them off. They giggle*] It sounds as if they didn't like it.

BRYN. I don't expect they were ever in prison. They don't look sports. Shall we try again?

DIANA. It's too risky.

BRYN. Well, we must do something.

DIANA. I tell you what. There are some honeyspooners in the room opposite.

BRYN. How d'you know they're honeyspooners?

DIANA. I watched them at dinner. Their eyes were all swimmy. Disgusting! We might give them a lesson. They're only French.

BRYN. They aren't, if you mean the girl with all that neck.

DIANA. Well! They were speaking French with an awful lot of accent.

BRYN. Only showing off. I heard the man say "damn" in the hall.

DIANA. [*Doubtfully*] Oh! That makes a difference. They might cut up rusty.

BRYN. Well, let's only put on hats and coats and run in as if we thought it was our room.

DIANA. Yes, that's quite natural.

BRYN. Only—the door'll be locked, Di.

DIANA. It mightn't be, yet.

BRYN. Honeyspooners always lock their doors the first minute.

DIANA. How d'you know?

BRYN. Because the moment they get in, he says: "Darling!" and she says: "Oh! James!" and then they begin to kiss. B-beu!

DIANA. Bryn, you're awful!

BRYN. *I* know! Let's stand outside their door and miaow.

DIANA. That's a scheme!

BRYN. *You* do it, Di. And I'll watch you when they come out.

DIANA. You are a worm.

BRYN. Well, bag's last!

DIANA. We'd better rehearse. You spit best—you do the spitting. [*They rehearse softly*] Safety first! If we put this screen outside their door we can get back before they see us.

BRYN. All right!

They go out on tiptoe.

DIANA. [*Outside in the lighted corridor*] Begin low, Bryn, and rather rallentando, then we'll work up. Now!

The sound of their caterwauling rises, swells a little, and then suddenly with a scuttle they are back. A moment later MRS LENNOX *appears in the corridor and enters their room. She is a lady of about thirty-five, pale, pretty and anxious-looking.*

BRYN. [*With innocent wide eyes*] Oh! is that you, Mum?

MRS L. What were you doing?

BRYN. Just practising cats.

MRS L. Did you put that screen out there?

DIANA. We thought you wouldn't like us to be seen, Mum.

MRS L. Di! you really ought to know better.

DIANA. Why, Mum? It's very harmless.

MRS L. Out of your room, when you should be in bed, and asleep.

DIANA. Well, Mum—this is Paris.

BRYN. Just seeing "life," you know.

MRS L. Monkeys! [*Seeing pillows tossed about*] Have you been pillow-fighting?

DIANA. Only softening them, Mum. Feel! They're awfully hard.

MRS L. It'll be a relief to get you home.

BRYN. Are we going to-morrow?

MRS L. If Father's well enough to travel. What's this odol doing here?

BRYN. What is it doing there, Di?

DIANA. Oh! It just strayed in.

MRS L. Go and get that screen back.

The children go out and bring back the screen. MRS LENNOX *tidies their beds.*

DIANA. Listen!

BRYN. [*At the window*] Doesn't he play beautifully?

She leans against the drawn-back curtain, at first feigning reverence, then genuinely moved. The violinist is playing Poise's "Le Joli Gilles."

MRS L. [*Not to be put off—to* DIANA] You girls are altogether too young for your age.

DIANA. Well, Mum! We've got to be old some day. It's no use beginning before we need.

MRS L. It's time *you* were getting serious, Di.

DIANA. Oh! no, not yet, Mum. *You* never have any fun. No one seems to have any fun after they're grown-up.

MRS L. All right, duckie. Keep your fun as long as you can.

DIANA. Yes, that's what I thought. Dad's kept some, hasn't he?

MRS L. Yes, you both take more after him than after me.

DIANA. Girls do. And boys take after their mothers. Dad's got a little joke inside that you couldn't put out, could you? He bubbles. [MRS LENNOX *cannot answer*] You don't want to put it out, do you?

MRS L. Heavens! No, child.

BRYN. Mum! I suppose all the people in this

hotel have come to see "life," haven't they? Why is there more "life" in Paris than in other places?

MRS L. It's a superstition, Bryn.

BRYN. And what is "life" anyway?

MRS L. A very ugly thing.

BRYN. Really?

DIANA. *I* know what it is—cocktails and dancing, and that.

BRYN. That tune gave me a funny feeling—here. [*She puts her hand on the middle of her waist*] It squeezed me.

DIANA. Don't be soppy, Bryn. Besides, your heart isn't there, it's higher, to the left.

BRYN. Mum, it's in your middle, isn't it?

MRS L. Anatomically—yes.

DIANA. Not in the tummy, Mum.

BRYN. It isn't my tummy. It's higher, in the diaphragum.

MRS L. Diaphragm, Bryn.

BRYN. Tell us more about "life," Mum.

MRS L. "Life," as they call it, has nothing to do with the heart, anyway.

BRYN. What has it to do with, then?

MRS L. The appetites. And it's the shortest way to destroy them.

DIANA. Does Dad say that, too? Or would he only just say it to *us* for fear that we might want to "see life"?

BRYN. But *can* you have too much dancing, Mum?

MRS L. Of this modern dancing, much too much.

BRYN. Was ancient dancing more virtuous ?

DIANA. I bet it wasn't. Dad says human nature doesn't change.

BRYN. When you used to dance, Mum, did it destroy your appetite ?

MRS L. [*Laughing*] No, increased it.

DIANA. There you are, then !

MRS L. You don't understand, darlings.

DIANA. But, Mum—*you* haven't seen any "life," have you ?

MRS L. Not in that sense, perhaps. But you can take it from me that it's silly, all the same.

BRYN. [*With a deep sigh*] I think it's so sad having to take things from other people.

MRS L. Now, darlings, you really must go to bed. I'll tuck you up.

BRYN. [*With suspicious readiness*] All right, Mum, we were waiting up for that. Come on, Di !

They race into bed. MRS LENNOX *tucks up and kisses first one and then the other.*

MRS L. Now be good, won't you ?

BOTH. Oh ! rather !

MRS LENNOX, *with a look back, goes out, switching off the light ; as she opens the door the cry "We want cocktails" from below comes in.*

BRYN. [*In the dark*] Di, I'm jolly thirsty.

DIANA. So'm I. Let's ring ! The bell's over you—three times for the waiter. [BRYN *rings emphatically.*]

DIANA. We'd better put our undies away. He's very old. Turn up!

BRYN *turns the light up. They both scramble out of bed and tidy away their undies. They have barely got back to bed when* GUSTAVE *is seen in the corridor, and there is a knock.*

DIANA. Entrez!

GUSTAVE *appears.*

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Mees?

BRYN. Oh! Gustave, we're *so* thirsty. Could you bring us some ginger-ale?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Mees. I bring it—veree sweet, veree cool.

DIANA. Are you always busy, Gustave?

GUSTAVE. 'Ave some gentlemen down there, Mees.

DIANA. Yes, we heard them calling for cocktails. I suppose they're seeing "life"?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Mees—a leetle life—veree nice.

DIANA. I suppose we couldn't have a little "life" up here, could we, Gustave?

GUSTAVE. [*Interrogating*] Excuse, Mees—life?

BRYN. She means cocktails.

GUSTAVE. [*With his smile*] No, Mees, not for young ladies.

BRYN. Do you like being a waiter, Gustave?

GUSTAVE. Yees, Mees—onlee one pitee—not time to talk to young ladees.

BRYN. We like you, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. [*With his patient ghost of a smile*] Veree glad, Mees. Excuse!

He turns to go; the CHILDREN *chant softly:* "*We like Gustave—we like Gustave—we like Gustave!*" GUSTAVE *gives them his patient smiling look back and goes.*

DIANA. Doesn't he look tired, Bryn? He's so old, and he has to run about like a rabbit. It's a shame. I'm sorry we rang, you know.

BRYN. I *am* thirsty, Di, and Mum makes such a fuss about water.

DIANA. Well, look here, *I'll* go down and get the ginger ale. That'll save him. [*Opens the door.*]

The violinist has begun to play a tango called "*Cumparsita.*"

DIANA. It's a tango; while I'm gone you can practise, then we can dance it together.

BRYN. All right. Hurry up!

DIANA *goes out, closing the door, and can be seen stopping and sniffing in the corridor.*

The music comes in at the window. BRYN, *who has quite a good notion of a tango, stands a moment and then begins to dance. She soon becomes quite absorbed, and dances till the tune stops. She runs to the window and leans out; almost at once she recoils, sniffing; as she does so the light goes out in the room and corridor. She gasps, gropes to the door in the dim light from the open window, and after trying the switch, opens the door and calls softly, then more loudly.*

Di! Di!

DIANA *appears from the corridor with a candle.*

DIANA [*Excitedly*] Bryn, the house is on fire. Are there any candles ?

BRYN. I say ! That'll be the first fire I've seen. Is it a real one ?

DIANA. It's all over the place downstairs, and coming up fast.

BRYN. Up the stairs ? Can't we get down, then ?

DIANA. No. Hurry up ! They can't put it out. [*She finds and lights two candles*] There are four men and Gustave trying to.

BRYN. Shall we go down and help ?

DIANA. No. We're to go on the roof. The engines are coming. Buck up !

BRYN. Have we got to dress ?

DIANA. No ; bung on your mack and shoes. [*She is herself doing this.*]

BRYN. [*Beginning to bung*] But we shall miss it all on the roof, Di.

DIANA. We shall see the engines, and we can find a way down—there'll be iron stairs, I expect.

BRYN. Does Mum know ?

DIANA. Of course she knows. I told them.

BRYN. [*Suddenly*] Listen ! He's still playing—he can't know. [*The violinist indeed is letting himself go on a Vivaldi-Bach Andante.*]

DIANA. We'll tell him as we go up. I routed out those stuffy old things.

BRYN. It's jolly exciting, isn't it ? Is Dad helping to put it out ?

DIANA. No, he's not well enough.

BRYN. Oh! Di, I must go down and see.

DIANA. [*Holding her*] No.

BRYN. It's not fair. You've had your go—— Well, let me startle those honeyspooners.

DIANA. All right! But hurry up!

BRYN *rushes out with a candle into the corridor, where it is dark. The sound of a fire-engine is heard.* DIANA *puts on a cap and runs to the window.* MRS LENNOX *enters from the corridor with her dressing-bag.*

MRS L. Where's Bryn, Di?

DIANA. [*Turning*] Oh! She's just stirring up the honeyspooners opposite.

MRS L. The what! [*Seizing a suit-case.*] Help me put things in—everything will be spoiled by the water.

DIANA *and she throw things into the suit-case.* BRYN *runs in.*

BRYN. I say! The door *wasn't* locked. They were *eating*—in the dark. Didn't they stare just! Oh! Mum! Isn't it exciting!

MRS L. Have you got your stockings on, Bryn?

BRYN. No.

MRS L. Put them on, then.

BRYN. Over my pys, or under?

MRS L. Under. And then get your sponge and things. Hurry! Now, listen! You're both to go quietly up on the roof, take this bag up—and stay there till we come. Diana, take care of Bryn, and

don't let her look over the edge. I must go back to Dad.

The TWO CHILDREN *are gazing at her,* BRYN *putting on her stockings.*

DIANA. [*Awed*] Is Dad really ill, Mum ?

MRS L. Yes.

BRYN. Oh ! Isn't it awful, then !

MRS L. [*At the door*] Now, my darlings, be good, and do what I say.

DIANA. Yes, rather !

BRYN. Can't we help at all ?

MRS L. No, only by doing what I say.

BRYN. All right, then, we will.

MRS L. Good girls. Bless you ! [*She goes.*

BRYN. Di, this is seeing " life," isn't it ?

DIANA. You bet ! Listen ! He's still playing ! Come on, Bryn !

Each with a candle in one hand, bag, suit-case, and sponge-bags in the other, they go out and down the corridor.

BRYN. Look at our shadows, Di ! Aren't they long !

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE IV

SCENE IV

SECOND FLOOR

The Same Evening: Midnight

The adjoining bedroom. In the two beds side by side, facing the footlights, are Mr *and* Mrs Beeton.

Mrs Beeton *is a decided-looking lady of about fifty, reading by the light of a bed-lamp.* Mr Beeton, *perhaps sixty, is asleep on his back with his mouth open beneath his stubby moustache, from it are issuing faint but deepening snores.*

Mrs B. [*Lowering her book*] Tom!

Mr B. *utters one of those louder snores cut off in the middle which mark the return to consciousness.*

Mr B. Eh? What?

Mrs B. You were snoring.

Mr B. What! I wasn't.

Mrs B. You were.

Mr B. Well, why didn't you tell me? You know it gives me a sore throat.

Mrs B. I have told you.

Mr B. [*After a pause*] I suppose you think you *never* snore.

MRS B. I know I don't.

MR B. My hat!

MRS B. You shouldn't lie on your back.

MR B. [*Turning on his side*] I don't. It doesn't suit me.

MRS B. I wish you wouldn't contradict me, Tom.

MR B. Contradict? I——?

MRS B. Yes, say you don't! [*Pause.*]

MR B. I suppose you think you never contradict me.

MRS B. Only when I have to.

MR B. My Aunt! [*A pause*] What's the time?

MRS B. Just struck twelve.

MR B. What are you reading there?

MRS B. A very silly book.

MR B. Then why do you read it?

MRS B. Because I'm not sleepy.

MR B. I told you not to drink that coffee. That's why you drank it, I suppose.

MRS B. Oh! go to sleep and let me read!

MR B. *turns his back on her with a grunt. A silence. Then* MRS B. *puts her book down.*

MRS B. [*Softly*] Tom! Are you asleep?

MR B. Yes. Why?

MRS B. What made you choose this hotel?

MR B. It's got a name for cooking. The dinner was first chop.

MRS. B. There's illness in the house. I saw a nurse.

MR B. Where?

MRS B. Close by.

MR B. Infectious ?

MRS B. How should I know ?

MR B. Didn't you ask ?

MRS B. No.

MR B. If you'd told me, I'd——

MRS B. Yes, what would you have done ?

MR B. Made a point of finding out, of course.

MRS B. Exactly !

MR B. [*Turning to her*] Well, d'you want to catch the 'flu ?

MRS B. Now, of course, you're in a stew !

MR B. Fiddlesticks ! I wish you wouldn't make me out an old woman.

MRS B. I don't need to.

MR B. Don't be funny !

MRS B. It's a man who's ill.

MR B. How d'you know ?

MRS B. The nurse was pretty.

MR B. That's no proof. You got me a perfect hag last winter.

MRS B. Naturally. There's a wife. She's very pale.

MR B. You seem to see everything.

MRS B. Listen, Tom ! [*Pause*] What's that tapping ?

MR B. I don't hear anything.

MRS B. Of course you don't, with your head under the bedclothes like that.

MR B. Look here ! Do you want me to go to sleep or not ?

MRS B. Yes, or you'll be fit for nothing to-morrow. I don't want to have to drag you round half awake.

MR B. All right, then! Good-night!

Turns his back on her.

MRS B. There *is* a tapping, Tom. It's on this wall.

MR B. [*Stirring*] Oh! damn! [*He frees his head.*]

MRS B. There! [*A tapping sound.*]

MR B. [*Screwing round towards the wall*] Here! What blasted lunatic——?

MRS B. I wish you wouldn't swear, Tom.

MR B. [*Thumping his fist on the wall*] Who is it next door?

MRS B. It's those children.

MR B. Children! Oh! Ah! Pretty kids! Well, I've stopped it.

MRS B. I wonder you didn't tap back.

MR B. [*Snuggling down*] I wish the deuce you—you——!

A silence, during which MRS B. *takes up her book.*

MRS B. [*Softly*] Tom! You're not asleep yet, are you?

MR B. Yes.

MRS B. You couldn't have been.

MR B. Why not?

MRS B. You weren't breathing.

MR B. Well, I can sleep without breathing.

MRS B. I can always tell when you're asleep. When you don't snore, you make a funny little ticking noise. [*Clucks with her tongue, like the tick of a clock.*]

MR B. Well, then, why d'you ask me ?

MRS B. I didn't want to wake you.

MR B. Well, you have.

MRS B. Did you fasten the door ?

MR B. Yes. No.

MRS B. Hadn't you better, then ?

MR B. What's it matter ?

MRS B. You wouldn't like it if my pearls were stolen.

MR B. *gets out of bed and goes to the lower door, which he opens. He shuts the door and turns the key.*

MR B. Rowdy lot down there !

MRS B. If you will choose little out-of-the-way hotels like this. I saw a young man with hair that stood out like a tea-tray.

MR. B. Black japanned hair. That's rather good. What ! [*Getting into bed again*] Let's go to sleep !

MRS B. Is the window open ?

MR B. About eight inches.

MRS B. That's not enough. It's very stuffy to-night.

MR B. [*Sighing*] All right ! All right ! [*Gets out of bed again and going to the window, opens it wider*] Now I suppose you'll say there's a draught.

MRS B. Don't be cross !

MR B. I'm not cross. [*Gets into bed*] Are you going to put that light out ?

MRS B. Give me a kiss, Tom.

He jerks himself up, kisses her cheek perfunctorily, and subsides. MRS B. *turns out the*

lamp. Darkness and silence. A sound of breathing rises.

MRS B. Tom!

MR B. Um?

MRS B. There's a mosquito!

MR B. [*Sitting up alert*] What! No!

MRS B. Listen! [*Pause*] There! Now!

MR B. [*The sportsman roused*] By Jove, there is! Turn up!

[MRS B. *turns up the light.*

I must get my specs. [*He gets out of bed, puts on a pair of spectacles, takes up a slipper, turns on the full light and proceeds to revolve slowly on his heels, scrutinising the ceiling and the walls*] There he is! [*Pointing*] No, it's a fly!

MRS B. [*Whose ears are also standing up*] Tom! What's that? [*Points.*]

MR B. [*Approaching mark on wall*] It's an old one, squashed. [*Pointing*] There he goes! Brute! Keep your eye on him!

MRS B. How can I? I haven't seen him

MR B. There, there!

MRS B. I see him. He's settled.

MR B. Where?

MRS B. [*Pointing*] Over that chest of drawers. Look! Right above—about five feet from the ceiling.

MR B. Right-o! I'll get on the drawers. Keep him spotted! [*With the help of a chair he climbs cumbrously on to the chest of drawers, cautiously raises his arm; aims, and slaps the slipper on the wall*] God!

I've missed him. [*Pauses, perched on chest of drawers gazing round*] Lost him now—lost him—lost him! Where'd he go?

MRS B. There he is, Tom!

MR B. Where?

MRS B. On the ceiling.

MR B. [*Climbing down*] I'll fetch him off with a slipper. Where?

MRS B. [*Pointing*] There!

MR B. I spot him. [*Hurls slipper*] He's off! Now! [*Both stare blankly*] They're so damned invisible.

MRS B. Look! He's settled over your bed. Take a towel. [MR BEETON *gets a towel.*

MR B. Watch him, old girl. [*Climbs on to his bed*] I believe I could reach him with the slipper.

MRS B. The towel will be safer.

MR B. Might flap him off.

MRS B. You'll overbalance. Take good aim, Tom. Make sure of him this time!

MR B. I'll get on the bolster.

He cautiously extends his arm upwards, makes a sudden furious dab with the slipper, and falls backwards on to the bed.

MRS B. There now! I told you.

MR B. [*On his back, with triumph*] *Got* him though! [*He scrutinises the sole of the slipper*] Look! [*Scrambling forward and showing it to her*] No blood in him, thank God!

MRS B. I must say you're splendid with mosquitoes, Tom.

MR B. [*Resuming an upright posture on the floor*]

Um, wasn't a bad shot—considering. Think there are any more ? [*He stands gazing round.*]

MRS B. Tom !

MR B. Hallo ?

MRS B. That very young man at dinner was the son of Lady Ilfracombe.

MR B. How d'you know that ?

MRS B. Looked in the register. The Honourable Reginald Fanning.

MR B. Looked rather a young juggins, I thought.

MRS B. Two of the men he was with were very Stock-Exchangey. The other one leads him about, a Major Moulteney.

MR B. How on earth you hear everything—I don't know !

MRS B. *I* use my ears.

MR B. You jolly well do ! [*Turning out main light and moving towards his bed*] There aren't any more. [*He prepares to get into bed.*]

MRS B. Tom ! There's a tap dripping in the bathroom.

MR B. Well, let it !

MRS B. You know if you once begin to hear it, it'll get on your nerves.

MR B. Oh ! All right. [*Leaves the bed and opens door into bathroom*] It isn't dripping.

MRS B. I heard it, I tell you.

MR B. You've got noises on the brain.

MRS B. Will you go and look at the taps, instead of standing there, arguing.

MR BEETON *disappears into the bathroom.*

MRS B. [*As he reappears*] Well ?

MR B. I suppose you might call it a drip with luck.

MRS B. There !

MR B. You needn't rub it in.

MRS B. I never rub it in.

MR B. My Sam ! [*Prepares to get into bed.*]

The NURSE *is seen in the corridor knocking at the door.*

MRS B. There's somebody knocking, Tom.

MR B. Oh ! Great Scott ! [*Gets out of bed*] What is it ?

Renewed knock.

He puts on a dressing-gown and slippers, goes to the door and opens it.

Yes ?

NURSE. [*Outside*] My patient has severe heart pain. You haven't such a thing as a hypodermic needle ? Mine's out of action.

MR B. [*Leaning in*] It's the nurse—wants to know if we've got a hypodermic needle. Haven't, have we ?

MRS B. Of course not. What's the matter ? Shall I—— ?

MR B. [*To the* NURSE] Awfully sorry—afraid we haven't.

The NURSE *is seen going back down the corridor.*

[*To his wife*] It's a heart case—so that's all right. Poor devil ! I suppose one ought to have one of those things handy. Nice-looking woman, what !

MRS B. I thought you'd think so.

MR B. There you go !

MRS B. What do you mean by "There you go!"?

MR B. Nothing—nothing! [*Prepares to get into bed.*]

MRS B. [*Ineffably*] Nothing, indeed!

MR B. Oh! let's get to sleep.

Gets into bed and settles down with his back to her.

MRS BEETON *after contemplating the back of his head with a certain acidity, turns out the lamp. Dark silence. Then a sound of sniffing.*

MRS B. [*Sharply*] Tom!

MR B. Good Lord! What now?

MRS B. There's a smell of burning.

The light in the corridor goes out.

MR B. What next? It's your nose, now.

MRS B. [*Sniffing*] Can't you smell it?

MR B. [*Sniffing*] Um? Yes—yes—distinct. Now, what the deuce?

MRS B. You didn't throw a match or a cigarette into——?

MR B. I like that, when you wouldn't let me smoke!

MRS B. It's getting worse. [*Tries to turn up lamp*] Tom! The light's off!

MR B. Nonsense! You imagine things.

MRS B. It is, I tell you.

MR B. I'll try the other switch. [*Gets out of bed in the dark and stubs his toe*] Damn! Stubbed my toe! Where is that switch?

MRS B. By the door.

MR B. [*Feeling the wall*] Can't find it. Oh! Here it is! Doesn't work.

MRS B. What did I say?

MR B. Fuse must have blown out.

MRS B. Where are your matches?

MR B. How should I know? Dash it! [*Groping*] Ow-w! Done it again!

MRS B. Pull the curtains, there'll be some light. [*Sniffs*] It's getting worse, Tom. [*Gets out of bed.*

MR B. [*Pulling the curtains. A feeble light comes in*] Here they are, on the chest of drawers. Who put 'em there?

MRS B. You did. [*Donning dressing-gown and slippers*] Light a candle.

MR BEETON *strikes a match and gropes round, seeking.* MRS BEETON *stands at the bottom of her bed sniffing.*

MR B. Where—where are they? Oh! Here's one! [*Lighting candle and gazing round*] Nothing wrong here. I'll go and scout.

He goes towards the door.

The pyjamad figure of the child DIANA LENNOX, *is seen outside in the corridor.*

MRS B. Be careful, Tom!

MR B. All right, all right! Hallo!

The door is burst open in his face by DIANA, *with a lighted candle in her hand.*

MRS B. There! You never fastened the door again, Tom!

DIANA. Awfully sorry! But the house is on fire. Isn't it exciting!

MRS B. On fire? What d'you mean, on fire?

DIANA. On fire. You can't get down. It's caught the stairs. We're to go on the roof. They've telephoned for the engines.

MRS B. Tom! [*Pointing*] Look!

A flicker as of flame from below is dimly seen through the window.

MR B. She's right! Here's a mess! Where are my trousers? Keep cool! [*To the* CHILD] You keep your head, young woman. [*Seeking*] Damn it, where *are* my trousers?

DIANA *has flitted, with her candle, and her figure is seen flying up the corridor, which is now dark again.* MRS BEETON *in the dim light is hitching up her nightgown under a skirt.*

Keep cool, old girl, keep cool! [*Drawing trousers over his pyjamas*] We'll pack. Put on your long coat! Where the hell is everything? Put your pearls on. Where's my watch?

MRS B. [*Cooler than he*] Under your pillow, of course, Tom.

The door is again opened, GUSTAVE *enters.*

GUSTAVE. [*Gently*] Sare, Madame! The 'ouse is fired.

MR B. Yes, yes, we know. Who's responsible? Why don't you put it out?

GUSTAVE. A beeg fire—the engines come.

MRS B. Can't we get downstairs?

GUSTAVE. Non, Madame—the roof. Veree comfortable—a fine view. Excuse! The sick gentleman.

He vanishes down the dark corridor.

MR B. Where are the passports—in your dressing-case ?

MRS B. Yes. I must do my hair, Tom. I'm not going out like a fright.

MR B. Nonsense ! What does your appearance matter ?

MRS B. You never think of my appearance.

MR B. Stuff it under your collar. They'll think you're shingled.

MRS B. [*With finality*] I'm going to do my hair.

MR B. All right, all right ! Hurry up with it, then ! The house'll burn like tinder. These French houses are all wood and paint.

MRS B. [*Before glass*] I must have the candle, Tom. Put it there. I call it frightfully careless not letting us know until the stairs were caught.

MR B. [*Packing*] I've got my dress things anyway. You won't have time to pack.

MRS B. I shall take my dressing-bag.

MR B. Got your keys, and your watch ? Right. I'll get my shaving things.

Sound of a fire engine.

By George ! There's an engine !

Goes into bathroom.

MRS B. Don't forget the toothbrushes. [*Twisting and rolling her hair ; to herself*] Tt, tt, it really is annoying ! [*Turns suddenly at a knock, with pins in her mouth*] Come in !

GUSTAVE'S *figure is dimly seen in the dark corridor.*

GUSTAVE. [*At the door*] Madame! Time to go on the roof, Madame.

MRS B. [*Through the pins*] Yes, yes! I can't be hurried.

GUSTAVE. I carry bag, Madame?

MRS B. [*Putting hairpinned hand on her dressing-bag*] No, don't you touch that. Take this suitcase.

GUSTAVE *takes the suitcase.*

There comes a howl from the bathroom.

VOICE OF MR B. Wow! I——! It's so damned dark!

MRS B. Come along, Tom—never mind——

MR B. [*Reappearing with sponge-bags, etc.*] Can't find my shaving brush. [*To* GUSTAVE] Hi, here's a soaked bath towel—might come in handy. [*Throws it to* GUSTAVE, *who places it over his arm like a napkin.*]

GUSTAVE. Yes, Sare! Please come, queeck, Sare and Madame.

MR B. All right, all right! Ready, old girl!

MRS B. [*With a final pin and pat*] I've never done my hair so quickly—how does it look, Tom?

MR B. Jolly fine—jolly fine! Here's your coat. [*Puts it on her*] Now then! [*He takes up the dressing-bag. The sound of a fire engine approaching is heard*] There's another! Good biz!

GUSTAVE. Sare, Madame—please, queeck!

He goes out.

MR B. All right, all right! Plenty of time! No good getting the wind up.

MRS B. Now, Tom, give me your word not to be rash.

MR B. Rash! I'm never rash.

They go to the door, pass out, leaving the room dark, and are seen in the corridor, MRS BEETON *carrying the candle.*

MR B. [*Without*] Here, take these, I've forgotten my pipe.

Sound of engines; then voice of MR BEETON *in the dark, within the room again.*

Where did I put the blasted thing?

MRS B. [*Without*] Tom, I'm not going up without you.

VOICE OF MR B. [*Within*] All right, all right, coming! [*To himself*] I know—got it! Wow! My shin!

Goes out.

MR B. [*In the corridor*] Come on, old girl, up we go!

VOICE OF MRS B. Does my nightgown show, Tom?

VOICE OF MR B. What? No! Yes! Yes! Looks jolly well—jolly well!

Their voices die.

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE V

SCENE V

SECOND FLOOR

The Same Evening: Midnight.

Another bedroom. The neighbouring clock is striking twelve.

The door opens and there enters a YOUNG WOMAN *in evening dress with a wrap over her arm.*

YOUNG WOMAN. [*As the clock finishes*] Twelve! How nice and early!

She turns up the light. The room is then seen to be in the disorder of a hurried unpacking, as of travellers just in from a train hastening down to dinner. She throws down her wrap and tidies the dressing-table, humming and whistling the "Habanera" from Carmen. She lays some pyjamas on a bed, then stands before the glass. She is an attractive young person. Breaking into the song, she sits down before the glass and touches herself up. The door is opened softly and the YOUNG MAN, *"Tony," in evening dress with a coat*

over his arm and a hat, comes in; he puts them down, comes up, leans over and kisses her.

YOUNG MAN. [*Fervently*] Darling!

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh! Tony! [*Puts her lips to his. A pause.*]

The YOUNG MAN *sits on the edge of the dressing table and lights a cigarette.*

YOUNG MAN. We took a chance, Nell—going to the opera.

YOUNG WOMAN. Ah! but Carmen's worth it. Gives you such a kick.

YOUNG MAN. D'you know, there's young Fanning in the hotel. Rotten luck! A little out-of-the-way place like this! I chose it so carefully.

YOUNG WOMAN. Fanning? D'you mean that babe Reggie? He was in pinafores last year—absolute mother's darling.

YOUNG MAN. Yes. He's being bear-led to get him ready for the Guards. It's all right. He hasn't seen you, and he shan't. I don't know the man he's with, luckily.

YOUNG WOMAN. No. But perhaps I do.

YOUNG MAN. [*Gloomily*] That's the worst of good cooking. You never know who'll be gathered round the fleshpots.

YOUNG WOMAN. I didn't have much of them to-night, after that crossing. Ugh!

YOUNG MAN. [*Gazing at her and chanting under his breath*] Carmen! Carmen! Nell, I shall call you Carmen.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Suddenly*] Tony! Tell me! Is *ours* a grand passion? Is it?

YOUNG MAN. If it wasn't, Nell, would you be here with me?

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Laying hold of his lapels*] But is it? Is there any such thing nowadays?

YOUNG MAN. Of course there is.

YOUNG WOMAN. I wonder! If it *is* a grand passion, it's going to be an awful life, Tony. Unless —I've got the pluck to cut the painter.

YOUNG MAN. What d'you mean, Nell? Of course you're going to cut the painter, or you wouldn't have come, and I wouldn't have asked you.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Turning round and gazing past him*] But, Tony, this is only a try-out. I thought you realised that?

YOUNG MAN. A try-out? Yes. But there's only one end to it.

YOUNG WOMAN. My grandmother ran away for good in what she stood up in. But *this* isn't a run-away age, Tony. It's an age of calculated divorce.

YOUNG MAN. I don't care what the rotten age is. I'm in love.

YOUNG WOMAN. Besides, she hated her husband, and I don't hate Charles. I've tried to, but I can't. He means nothing. You can't hate something that means nothing.

YOUNG MAN. Well, *I* hate him.

YOUNG WOMAN. Only because he has me. And not enough to stick a knife into me, like Don José, if I go back to him.

YOUNG MAN. I'd stick a knife into *him* fast enough, if you went back after this!

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Shaking her head*] Not done in the best circles, Tony.

YOUNG MAN. If I could without being hanged.

YOUNG WOMAN. That's mean.

YOUNG MAN. Passion makes you mean. I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't come, Nell. I couldn't have stood it any more.

YOUNG WOMAN. No; but, Tony, for both our sakes —we really have got to find out; I couldn't go wrong a second time. Think of my reputation!

YOUNG MAN. Nell!

YOUNG WOMAN. No, don't look like that! I've been married and you haven't. I've seen a man flare up for me and go out. I've seen myself make a terrible bloomer. Who knows whether *we* shall have burned out or be still alight three weeks from now?

YOUNG MAN. [*Squeezing out his cigarette*] Alight, and flaming!

YOUNG WOMAN. I wonder.

YOUNG MAN. [*Putting his hands on her shoulders and turning her square to him*] You little doubter! No, I shan't call you Carmen. She didn't talk about try-outs.

YOUNG WOMAN. She was a prize vamp. I'm only an average vamp, Tony.

YOUNG MAN. You're not a vamp.

YOUNG WOMAN. Vamp: Siren: Enchantress: *vide* Delilah: species of female given to pursuit of the male. Did I pursue you, Tony?

YOUNG MAN. No, darling.

YOUNG WOMAN. Did you pursue me ?

YOUNG MAN. No, darling.

YOUNG WOMAN. What happened then ?

YOUNG MAN. We looked, we touched, we loved. Could we help it ?

YOUNG WOMAN. Of course we could have helped it—by being unhappy.

YOUNG MAN. In torment, Nell. You are all I want.

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh ! what a stretcher ! All—for the moment.

YOUNG MAN. For ever.

YOUNG WOMAN. Darling, what optimism ! You're not selling a horse.

YOUNG MAN. No, I'm buying my life.

YOUNG WOMAN. So you think now.

YOUNG MAN. I know my mind.

YOUNG WOMAN. Doesn't the mind change ? When the cake is eaten the child begins to cry : [*Taking his ears*] I love you, Tony, but I don't know if I shall three weeks hence. And suppose I don't !

YOUNG MAN. You will.

YOUNG WOMAN. And suppose you don't !

YOUNG MAN. I shall.

YOUNG WOMAN. So speaks the hungry male. [*Rising and clasping her hands to her waist*] Tony, I've got an awful sinking—not a moral sinking, a real one—you know, I practically had no dinner.

YOUNG MAN. My poor lamb ! Where's the bell ? How about caviare ? [*Rings.*]

YOUNG WOMAN. Marvellous !

YOUNG MAN. And that stuff—Chateau Yquem.

YOUNG WOMAN. Divine! I could live on them for months. Oh! Tony, I shall be awfully happy when I've had them.

YOUNG MAN. I thought there was something wrong with your blood-pressure.

GUSTAVE *can be seen outside in the corridor.*

YOUNG WOMAN. It simply isn't pressing. Look! There's a nice little table.

As the YOUNG MAN *places it and two chairs, there comes a knock.*

Entrez!

GUSTAVE. [*Entering*] Sare—Madame?

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh!—er—est ce que vous avez du caviare?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Madame—veree good, veree fresh.

YOUNG MAN. Oh! then bring a lot, will you, quick; and lemon and butter and bread—never mind toasting it. Oh! and a bottle of Chateau Yquem.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare—with caviare, too sweet, Sare. A 'ock, Sare. Schloss Johannisberg—veree fine.

YOUNG MAN. All right!

GUSTAVE. An olive, Sare—leetle olives veree black, veree good.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, olives; but quick, please.

GUSTAVE. [*Nodding, with his faint smile*] Ye-es, Sare.

He slides away and can be seen hastening down the corridor.

YOUNG MAN. That old chap knows what's what.

YOUNG WOMAN. He has a charming face. *I* should hate having to bring nice things for other people to eat all day. What's that? [*She listens, leaning, against the foot-rail of the bed.*]

A sound of caterwauling from the corridor.

YOUNG MAN. Cats—courting! Jolly, isn't it? This is a queer little old place, awfully French.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*As the sound swells and suddenly ceases*] Tony, I was wondering—have *we* got any further than *that*?

YOUNG MAN. I don't know and I don't care—I've got *you*. [*But instead of seizing her he only lifts her hand to his lips.*]

YOUNG WOMAN. Thank you, dear, for that moderate gesture. It gives me hope. Has it ever struck you, Tony, that the great thing about love is that each should know by instinct what the other wants at the moment?

YOUNG MAN. Yes. [*Hesitating*] I've written a poem to you, Nell.

YOUNG WOMAN. Tony! How *thrilling*! That is exactly what I want at the moment. Let's hear it. Now! At once!

YOUNG MAN. Not till you're stronger—You must be nourished.

A knock.

Here it comes.

Enter GUSTAVE *with tray, which he disposes.*

GUSTAVE. Caviare, Sare—veree fresh. The wine a little cold.

YOUNG MAN. Splendid!

The two seat themselves. GUSTAVE *helps them to caviare.*

GUSTAVE. A squeeze of lemon, Madame. Ye-es.

YOUNG MAN. [*Apologetic*] Afraid this is rather late for you. We've been to the Opera Comique. [*They eat.*]

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare. Carmen. Veree nice.

YOUNG WOMAN. Oh! Do you know it?

GUSTAVE. Not in de flesh, Madame. I listen-in one time.

YOUNG WOMAN. You never get a chance in the evening, I suppose?

GUSTAVE. Non, Madame.

YOUNG MAN. Don't you ever get off?

GUSTAVE. Oh! yes, Sare—Sundays.

YOUNG MAN. Sundays? Can you get any fun then?

GUSTAVE. I go feeshing, Sare. [*Pouring out wine*] Veree nice, Madame.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Drinking*] Lovely!

GUSTAVE. What a wine! It 'ave a perfume. Like life, Madame? Anyt'ing else, Sare?

YOUNG MAN. Nothing, thank you. And never mind about the tray.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare. What time I bring the coffee, to-morrow morning?

YOUNG MAN. Oh! say—ten o'clock.

GUSTAVE. Veree good, Sare. Bon soir, Madame! Bon soir, Monsieur!

BOTH. Bon soir! [GUSTAVE *goes.*

YOUNG WOMAN. Nice old man! "I go feeshing, Sare!" This caviare's divine, Tony. It was an inspiration; and the wine's perfect. Now for the poem—all about me!

YOUNG MAN. [*Producing a sheet of paper*] I know it by heart. Sure you're up to it, Nell?

YOUNG WOMAN. Try me!

THE YOUNG MAN. [*Leaning a little towards her, begins*]

"Avowal.

"Thou art my Love, and I alway,
That nothing rueful thee dismay,
My every waking thought intend
From this beginning to the end.
And in my sleep I dream of thee
That unto me thou linkéd art,
And we are sailing, thou and I,
To watch the silver fishes fly,
The stars uncounted in the sky,
And that great floorway of the sea."

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Under her breath*] I love that!

He goes and sits beside her till their faces are close together.

YOUNG MAN. "Then come with me if thou would'st know
A summer that will never go,
Flowers unfading and the tune
Of sheep-bells wandering in June.
And I will conjure till these seem
Such part of elfin land to thee,
That backed on swallow thou shalt fly

And chase the thistle floating by,
And ride on moonbeams thro' the sky
To rob dark night of ecstasy.
I am a world devoted quite,
That lives but when thou'rt in my sight,
Ah! dwell in me, and I will try.
To make thee happy till I die."

He drops the paper, from which indeed he has not been reading, and seizes her hand.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Emotionalised*] Tony! [*Looking at him*] All that?

YOUNG MAN. [*With her hand to his lips*] And more! [*He kisses her hand till she draws it away.*]

YOUNG WOMAN. But are people ever faithful? Look at me!

YOUNG MAN. You had no luck, Nell, The real thing's a divine accident, and it's happened to us.

YOUNG WOMAN. So all lovers say until they've had enough. You don't know me, Tony, you don't know me.

YOUNG MAN. Better than you know yourself.

YOUNG WOMAN. I'm a selfish baggage. I want my own way.

YOUNG MAN. More than you want me?

YOUNG WOMAN. Perhaps. I'll have to be tested.

YOUNG MAN. You *will* be.

YOUNG WOMAN. And suppose I don't stand fire?

YOUNG MAN. You will.

YOUNG WOMAN. But if I didn't!

YOUNG MAN. [*Sombrely*] "Who dares not put it to the touch?"

YOUNG WOMAN. Do you despise me, Tony ?

YOUNG MAN. "Thou art my Love, and I alway"——

YOUNG WOMAN. Tony, you're single-hearted, you ought to be exhibited. Listen !

They listen. The violinist has begun to play the "Cumparsita."

Cumparsita ! My favourite tango.

YOUNG MAN. [*Filling the glasses and holding his up*] Nell ! Death to doubt !

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Raising her glass*] "Death to——" [*The light goes out.*

YOUNG MAN. Hallo !

YOUNG WOMAN. Is that an omen ?

YOUNG MAN. A good one. To our leap in the dark. No heel-taps. [*Drinks.*]

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Drinking—with a little laugh*] Well ! Light up ! There are some candles on the dressing-table.

YOUNG MAN. It'll come up again directly. There's light enough to eat by. Eat, pretty creature, eat !

They sit and eat.

YOUNG WOMAN. Feasts in the dark at school ! Sardines on Bath olivers, rolling off on to the beds. This wine's going right down into my toes. D'you know that feeling ? Darling Tony ! You *have* been sweet to me to-day. After my exhibition on the boat ! If you could stand that, you can stand anything.

YOUNG MAN. From *you*, Nell.

YOUNG WOMAN. Tony, you're a fanatic ! [*Holding out her glass*] My love to you !

BRYN *with her candle is seen in the corridor. They clink glasses. The door is burst open;* BRYN, *with her lighted candle, stands before them.*

YOUNG MAN. Hallo!

BRYN. Oh! You're eating! Awfully sorry! I thought you'd like to know the house is on fire. You can't get down. We've got to go on the roof.

She flies out again, banging the door.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*In consternation*] Tony!

YOUNG MAN. [*Sniffing*] By Jove! There *is* a fire! What awful luck! [*He jumps up, gropes, and lights candles.*

The YOUNG WOMAN *has gone to the door and opened it.*

YOUNG WOMAN. I can see the flames down there. Tony, I'm scared—I'm scared.

YOUNG MAN. It'll be all right, darling. We've hardly taken anything out. Jam the things in. We'll take our bags up on the roof; we can get the big luggage at the station and be off by the first train.

YOUNG WOMAN. I hate fire—we had a fire once, at home. It's awful.

YOUNG MAN. Don't worry, darling, we shall be all right up there—they'll soon get us down. Put on your travelling coat.

They are hurriedly putting things into a suitcase and dressing-bag.

YOUNG WOMAN. But, Tony, you don't see. We shall be spotted! Reggie Fanning!

YOUNG MAN. Oh! damn him! Look here, put this scarf over your head, it'll hide your face if he comes up there. [*He winds it round her head*] You look so sweet!

YOUNG WOMAN. Kiss me! I feel this is the end, Tony. We shall never——

YOUNG MAN. [*Kissing her*] Now, now, Nell! Stay here a minute.

He goes into the corridor.

The BEETONS *pass him in the corridor.*

MR B. [*To him*] Awkward, isn't it? What! This hotel's dam' badly managed. We've got to go on the roof.

YOUNG MAN. So I hear, Sir. [*Into the room*] Stout couple just gone up. Ready, Nell? It's all clear.

YOUNG WOMAN. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

YOUNG MAN. Bosh! It's the test, Nell—and we'll see it through. Come on! [*Looking out again*] Now, darling!

She goes out, he looks round him, catches up his coat and hat, and candle in hand, follows.

YOUNG WOMAN. Which way, Tony?

YOUNG MAN. Make for the musician.

CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE VI

SCENE VI

SECOND FLOOR

The Same Evening : Midnight

A fourth and fully lighted bedroom.

HENRY LENNOX, *in a dressing gown, is (standing) facing the window, on the Right, which is wide open. He is a thin man past fifty, with a pale, whimsical, wistful face, across which pass at times spasms of pain.* MRS LENNOX *comes from the bathroom.*

MRS L. Harry, how naughty of you !

LENNOX. Yes, my love. Let me stand awhile in thought. And look here, my dear. It's midnight. You go to bed.

MRS L. Are you easier, Harry ?

LENNOX. M'm ! Yes. Always easier. Some day very easy.

MRS L. Don't !

LENNOX. My child, we all have to walk out, some time. [*Pointing to window*] Look at that ! Nice little square—I always liked Paris—it hath a pleasant stink. But what I miss in this room is a view of the workers on the top floors—more characteristic

thing in France, those workers on the top floors, busy as ants.

MRS. L. Yes, what *do* they make ?

LENNOX. Cotton, tape, and laces. Where's Nurse ?

MRS L. Having her supper downstairs. She'll be up directly.

LENNOX. [*Moving to the sofa*] Nice woman—not ordinary—got background, I should say. The thing I most regret in life, Evelyn, is that I haven't known all about everybody I've ever met.

MRS L. [*With a smile*] That's modest.

LENNOX. Modest but greedy.

MRS L. You're not greedy.

LENNOX. Avid, my dear. Haven't written half enough books, or half good enough. Haven't loved half enough women.

MRS L. [*Drily*] I'm sorry.

LENNOX. Nothing personal, my love. Never eaten at a sitting as many oysters as I should like—not by dozens. But as I say, what I regret most is not having been in the skin of everybody else.

MRS L. You *are* absurd.

LENNOX. [*After lying still a moment with his eyes closed from pain*] Imagine ! You mayn't stare at people ; you mayn't listen to their private conversations ; you mayn't even get under their beds ; you mayn't do anything that would give you some real knowledge of them. It's tragic ; or rather it's a clean stopper on comedy. And comedy is the saving grace, my love. [*With a smile cut off by pain.*]

MRS L. Oh! You're in pain again! Why doesn't Nurse come? [*She goes towards the door.*

LENNOX. Don't spoil her supper. They cook jolly well here.

MRS L. As if her supper mattered!

LENNOX. That's where you're too English, my love, grasping at conscience and missing casseroles. That poor woman would come rushing up supperless, and what can she do? The digitalis is over there [*Pointing*] if you want to give me some.

MRS LENNOX *measures a dose.*

That's what I like about the French. By giving full spiritual attention to the body they avoid starvation and repletion, and so are able to give full bodily attention to the spirit.

MRS L. [*Bringing him the dose*] Better not talk any more.

LENNOX. I won't. [*Drinking*] We English you know still look on the body as the devil. It's bad form, until it's dead—then we're all over it. The body becomes sacred at once. We catch our deaths burying it—by the way, don't let anybody get pneumonia over me. We write books about it. We dig it up to search for arsenic; and sit on it for weeks together. And we assert that it's going to rise again. Considering how we treat it till it's dead, it's unreasonable. But, after all, what would the English be without their sweet unreasonableness.

MRS L. Now that's enough, Harry!

LENNOX. [*Taking her hand*] Right you are, dear

one. That stuff always goes to my head. Where are the girls sleeping ?

MRS L. Quite close. They're wildly excited about Paris. Harry, I *should* like to get home ; d'you think you'll be able to travel the day after to-morrow?

LENNOX. [*Patting her hand*] I'll have a good stab at it, as my more genial colleagues say.

MRS L. We can take Nurse on for the journey. Oh ! Here she is !

The NURSE *is seen outside in the corridor. She enters, attractive in her uniform, and with an unprofessional smile.*

NURSE. So sorry I've been so long. There's only one waiter on duty, and he's on the run all the time, poor old fellow.

MRS L. I think I'll go and see if the children are all right. He's just had a dose, Nurse.

She goes out, and is seen going down the corridor.

LENNOX. Nurse, there's some one playing the violin.

NURSE. I've been talking to the young man. He's a Yugo-Slav, who's been in America ten years. He says you're much loved in the States.

LENNOX. Yes, I've never been there.

The strains of the violin float in through the open window. They listen. On LENNOX'S *face comes a smile at first, then a sombre melancholy. The playing stops.*

LENNOX. I know that little tune—Le joli Gilles, by Poise—used to hear Corsanego play it at Monte

in the 'nineties. [*Suddenly to the* NURSE, *who is at the window looking out*] Nurse, forgive an awkward question—but you must have seen a lot of death. Is it, or isn't it ?

NURSE. [*Turning*] The end ? I don't know, Mr Lennox ; I don't think so.

LENNOX. I'm afraid it *is*.

NURSE. [*Turning to him*] I once saw an old lady die, she was all darkened and drawn, quite unconscious. Suddenly she smiled very faintly, very sweetly, and was gone. Why—why did she smile, if something hadn't opened to her ? It was so happy.

LENNOX. "She got a crown—we got a crown—
All God's chillen got a crown."
But what if the crown is just relief at oblivion, Nurse ?

NURSE. Could one smile at nothingness ?

LENNOX. I wonder. This attack may finish me, you know. I've had three. One oughtn't to be so interested in one's own concerns, but then, you see [*With a smile*] one is.

NURSE. [*Coming over to him*] Of course, one is. But it's going to be all right with care.

LENNOX. It'd be better for my wife if it were all over. It's terrible for her. Nothingness ! [*With a smile*] There's no realising that one won't *be* !

NURSE. [*Eagerly*] But that's just it, Mr Lennox. Surely if one can't realise nothingness, death *can't* be the end ?

LENNOX. [*Shaking his head*] I'm afraid that belief in the persistence of life is just natural to the state

of being alive, Nurse. Under an anæsthetic one has no belief in anything; and no life anywhere.

NURSE. I believe there's an answer to that.

LENNOX. I hope you're right, Nurse. The eternal anæsthetic?

"Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

That's the spirit to die in and I haven't got it, Nurse. I funk dying; and I'm afraid of showing that I funk it. Do I show?

NURSE. You certainly don't.

LENNOX. Good! It's been a relief to confess. What made you take up nursing?

NURSE. [*Simply*] I lost my husband.

LENNOX. Long?

NURSE. Four years ago—in a motor smash.

LENNOX. Poor Nurse!

NURSE. [*Simply*] I don't like to think death's the end; I want to see him again. [LENNOX *nods.*] But I know that's not a reason. [*Looking into his face*] You ought to have some nourishment, now. There's some very nice cold consommé downstairs. [*She rings*] That old waiter Gustave is such a dear. When the French are nice, they're awfully nice.

LENNOX. I've always wanted to write the story of a waiter.

NURSE. Have a talk with him when he comes up.

LENNOX. [*With a sigh*] It won't tell me what he's thinking. And that's my job—to tell how people feel and think by the way they don't look and act. There's one thing, Nurse, we're all better, or at least

more vivid than we seem. Life's a pagoda. We hatch in the basement and take wings on the roof, and in between we live masked in a sort of unending bluff, and who knows what we're really like ?

NURSE. Gustave is transparent anyway—patient to the core, and looks it. [GUSTAVE *is seen in the corridor.*]

LENNOX. I envy people with patience—I never had any. [*There is a knock*] Come in !

The door is opened and GUSTAVE *appears.*

GUSTAVE. Sare ?

NURSE. Monsieur would like some of that nice cold consommé, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare. I get it. A biscuit, thin, and creesp. Ye-es ?

LENNOX. What's the name of the violinist, Gustave ?

GUSTAVE. Froba, Sare, veree clevare. He annoy you, Sare ?

LENNOX. Not a bit ! He's got a touch.

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare. He make it speak.

NURSE. *I'll* get the consommé, Gustave. Stay and talk to Mr Lennox.

GUSTAVE. *Merci*, Mademoiselle—veree kind !

The NURSE *goes out and down the corridor.*

LENNOX. Sit down, Gustave. You must get tired.

GUSTAVE. [*Sitting ; with his faint smile*] Ye-es, Sare—the feet a leetle.

LENNOX. Always a waiter ?

GUSTAVE. From the cradle, as you say, Sare.

LENNOX. Good life ?

GUSTAVE. One is accustomed.

LENNOX. Not married ?

GUSTAVE. No, Sare, no time as yet.

LENNOX. But you must be my age, I should think.

GUSTAVE. [*With his faint smile*] Yes, Sare. Perhaps I range myself some day—'oo know ?

LENNOX. Well, you see every kind of type—that's something. But I suppose you haven't time to study them.

GUSTAVE. 'Ave a leetle fun some time, Sare.

LENNOX. You get human nature about at its worst—satisfying appetite. Ugly thing appetite, Gustave.

GUSTAVE. [*Shrugging*] To eat, to drink, to love—veree natural, Sare.

LENNOX. Wasn't it Maupassant who said—the only way to avoid temptation was to yield to it. That the measure of the human being, Gustave ?

GUSTAVE. No, Sare. But it need an occasion to show what else more is dere.

LENNOX. Right you are !

GUSTAVE. De war, Sare—'oo knowed 'oo was brave, and 'oo was not till de war. De poltroon suddenly was brave, and de brave sometime poltroon. But 'ow few de poltroon !

LENNOX. See anything of it yourself, Gustave ?

GUSTAVE. Yes, Sare. Was steward in Engleesh transports veree uncomfortable. And the sous-marines, oh ! là, là ! veree annoying.

LENNOX. Were you sunk ?

GUSTAVE. Three time, Sare. I bob like a cork. But I learn English.

LENNOX. And human nature.

GUSTAVE. Yes, Sare. Veree funny—but sometime veree fine.

A noise is heard. GUSTAVE *rises and opens the door. The sound resolves itself into a cry of "We want cocktails—we want cocktails!"*

LENNOX. Voice crying in the wilderness? Um?

GUSTAVE. [*Smiling*] Ye-es, Sare. A gentleman—'e want cocktails.

LENNOX. And you've got to get 'em?

GUSTAVE. Ye-es, Sare; excuse! I bring the consommé—veree nice, veree cold.

GUSTAVE *goes out and down the corridor, passing* MRS LENNOX.

LENNOX. An occasion to show! [*To himself*] O God! Let me not show fear! [*As* MRS LENNOX *enters*] Chicks all right?

MRS L. Wild as kittens. I left them in bed, but I'm sure they won't stay there. Where's Nurse?

LENNOX. Bringing me up some fodder. I've had the old waiter here. Such a type!

Draws in his breath at sharp pain.

MRS L. [*Anxiously*] Harry!

LENNOX. [*Eyes shut, faintly*] It's all right, it's all right. [*The* NURSE *is seen in the corridor.*]

MRS L. [*Going to the door*] Oh! Nurse, quick!

The NURSE *enters with a cup and some biscuits, puts them down and goes quickly to* LENNOX.

She and MRS LENNOX *stand close to him in great anxiety.*

MRS L. Can't anything be done to stop that pain?

NURSE. Hypodermic—but my needle's broken.

MRS L. Perhaps the people next door?

NURSE. I'll try them.

Goes quickly to the door and out into the corridor. The spasm passes. LENNOX *lies exhausted.*

LENNOX. [*Smiling faintly*] So sorry!

MRS L. Oh! Harry.

LENNOX. The old waiter was telling me what happened to him in the war. He was sunk three times and bobbed like a cork—the old hero.

The NURSE *returns.*

NURSE. No luck! [*Looking at* LENNOX] Thank heaven, it's passed.

MRS LENNOX *turns up to the window, crying quietly. The figure of the child* DIANA *is seen coming up the corridor. While the* NURSE *stands close, looking compassionately down at* LENNOX, *the door is softly opened and the head of* DIANA *is poked in.*

DIANA. [*Excitedly whispering*] May I come in, Nurse?

LENNOX. [*Overhearing.*] Come on, rogue!

DIANA *comes in.*

DIANA. There's such a smell of burning, Daddy. I think something's on fire. Can I go down and see?

MRS L. [*Turning sharply from the window*] 'Ssh! Diana—Daddy's not——

NURSE. [*Sniffing*] There *is* a smell of burning—*I'll* go.

DIANA. No, please, Nurse—let me, let me! I simply must.

She flies to the door and goes out. She is hardly out of the room before the light goes out.

MRS L. How maddening!

LENNOX. Patience, my dear! My matches are on the chest of drawers, Nurse.

NURSE. I've got them. [*Strikes one*] Oh! *there* are some candles. [*Lights two candles.*

MRS L. [*Distracted*] Diana wandering about in the dark. I— [*She goes to the door. Sharply*] Nurse!

The NURSE *goes to her.*

Look! Look! Whatever is that glare, and the noise! Ring the bell?

VOICE OF DIANA. [*Without*] Mum! [*She comes in*] The house *is* on fire, Mum. It's down there. There are some men trying to put it out. They're buzzing about like bees. Isn't it exciting?

MRS L. 'Ssh!

LENNOX. [*Sitting up*] All right, my dear. It's doing me good.

They turn towards him.

DIANA. Oh! Nurse, give me a candle. I'll go and warn everybody. What fun if we have to go on the roof!

She snatches a candle and runs off down the corridor.

LENNOX. [*Getting to a sitting position*] I'll get into marching order, Nurse.

The NURSE *has found another candle, and lighted it.* MRS LENNOX *brings his coat and waistcoat, and helps him on with them. Through the still open door come confused sounds.*

NURSE. [*Calmly*] They'll put it out all right. Don't move yet, Mr Lennox. [LENNOX *sits clothed and passive, facing the footlights.*]

LENNOX. Don't worry about me. Get on with the salvage. Got the passports, dear? I'll put on my shoes, Nurse.

NURSE. No, let me.

She puts them on, while MRS LENNOX *collects property.*

GUSTAVE *is seen in the corridor.*

LENNOX. New cure for heart trouble? I feel fine.

GUSTAVE. [*Appearing in the doorway; gently*] Monsieur, Madame — the 'ouse burn, Madame. Plentee time — a leetle journey to the roof, Sare—one flight onlee, Madame, and the iron steps.

LENNOX. Splendid, Gustave!

GUSTAVE. Beeg fire — flames veree 'igh; but soon the pompiers come. Excuse, Madame, I tell the ladee and gentleman next door, and come back.

He vanishes.

MRS L. This is terrible. Harry!

LENNOX. [*Calmly*] Go and see to the chicks, dear. Nurse and Gustave will give me a hand, eh, Nurse?

NURSE. It's all right, Mrs Lennox, we can manage perfectly.

MRS LENNOX, *after a look at him, hurries out in her coat, and with a bag in her hand.*

LENNOX. [*Leaning back with his eyes closed*] Nurse, I thought this was going to be good for me, but I'm afraid it isn't.

NURSE. [*Applying salts*] Gently! There's plenty of time.

LENNOX. [*Faintly*] All the time in the world, and a little over perhaps.

NURSE. [*Applying flask*] Drink some brandy.

LENNOX. [*After drinking*] Ah! That's better! Now, Nurse!

She puts her arm round him, and he stands.

GUSTAVE *is seen in the corridor. As they move towards the door, he comes in.*

GUSTAVE. *Les pompiers*, the engines come, Sare.

They stand listening to the approaching claxon of a fire-engine.

LENNOX. Nurse, I think I'd rather bet on the engines and just wait.

NURSE. Very well. Come back to the sofa. I'll wait with you.

GUSTAVE. Sare, we carry you. The flames march so queeck—better we carry you.

LENNOX. [*Sitting*] No, Gustave. Get your other folk up. I shall be all right.

GUSTAVE. [*Lifting his hands in patient protest*] I come back, Sare.

He goes again, and is seen running down the corridor.

LENNOX. Now, Nurse, trot along!

NURSE. [*With a smile*] Don't be silly.

LENNOX. The Nurse stood on the burning deck whence all but she had fled. First poem I ever learned; indelibly connected with strawberry jam. Well, I'm all for cremation, and one will avoid the service.

The swish of water is heard.

[*Putting his hand to his heart*] Yes, I've got to take the chance. I don't feel like moving. Nurse, there's a little photograph in the left-hand top drawer there —d'you mind?

The NURSE *gets it.*

[*Looking at it*] My wife when she was three years old. Nice—um? Now, Nurse, please go! You'll find me here quite comfortable when they've put the fire out. Please!

NURSE. You know I can't leave you.

GUSTAVE. [*Appearing from corridor*] Time to go, Sare.

LENNOX. Gustave, take Nurse away.

NURSE. Mr Lennox, I think for your wife and children's sake we ought to have a try.

A pause. The shadow of his fear passes over LENNOX'S *face. He masters it.*

LENNOX. All right, Nurse, since you won't go.

NURSE. Lean all your weight on me.

LENNOX *rises.*

GUSTAVE. [*With suit-case in one hand*] The arm round my neck, Sare—round Mademoiselle's neck —veree comfortable, veree easy. Now, Sare, we march.

They move thus towards the door. Just there LENNOX'S *heart suddenly gives way, and he becomes dead weight. They bend and halt in horror.*

NURSE. [*Looking in his face; in a whisper*) I'm afraid he's——

GUSTAVE. Oh! oh! I get 'elp, we carry 'eem.

NURSE. He's dead, Gustave.

On GUSTAVE *dropping the suit-case to cross himself and hold up his hand in patient dismay,*

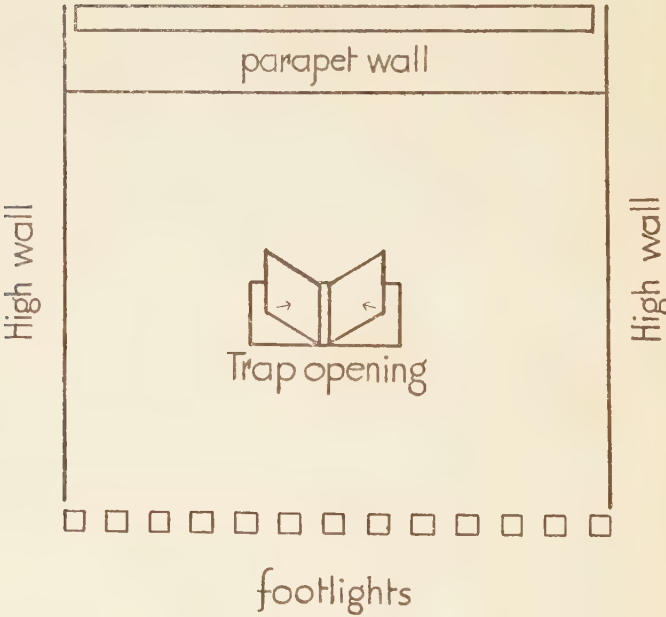
THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE VII

SCENE VII

Back cloth of roofs and sky

Space the other side
out of sight.



SCENE VII

THE ROOF

The Same Evening: twenty minutes past Midnight.

The empty moonlit roof, shut in by much higher roofs on either side, with a trap door Centre. There is a parapet at the back of the stage, and from over it one sees the roofs of houses and the stars in the sky. Bright moonlight throws shadows, and the flare of flame is seen at times. The engines are playing on the fire below, with an intermittent hissing.

The trap door is raised and the capped head of Mr Beeton *is seen emerging. He looks round him and calls down.*

Mr B. It's all right—quite flat. No smoke. Up you come!

He puts down a bag and stands reaching down his hand, takes his wife's dressing-case, deposits it, and reaches his hand down again.

Mrs B.'s Voice. No, Tom, you're only clawing me; I can manage. Is anybody up there?

Mr B. Not a cat.

Mrs Beeton's *head and body, to the waist, emerge.*

Give us both hands. Now then! [MRS BEETON *arrives.*]

MRS B. Have you looked over?

MR B. [*At the parapet*] M'm! It's a long way down! No flames yet this side. They'll rig something up. [*Looking at the high side walls*] Why they built a little house in between two big ones like this I don't know. Perverse devils the French!

The head of DIANA *has emerged from the trap.* Hallo! So *you've* got here all right, young woman. Where's your sister?

DIANA. [*Looking down the trap*] Come on, Bryn.

BRYN. [*Running to the parapet*] Oo! It's beastly high! Shall we have to go down a rope? [*Turning to* MRS BEETON] Can you climb down ropes?

MRS B. I could when I was your age. But they'll put us into chutes or something won't they, Tom? Do you see any firemen?

MR B. Not yet! This is the back of the house. Goodness knows if these French firemen are any good. What do they call 'em? Pomp— -

DIANA. Pompiers.

MR B. Ah! Pompeers.

DIANA. Look, Bryn! [*Pointing to the trap; softly*] The Honeyspooners!

She and BRYN *go to the far corner of the parapet. The* YOUNG WOMAN, *her head swathed in the scarf, emerges, followed by the* YOUNG MAN. *They both move over to the parapet.*

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Shuddering*] I do hate heights, Tony.

MR B. [*Approaching the* YOUNG MAN] Let me introduce my wife. [*The* YOUNG PEOPLE *bow, and the* YOUNG WOMAN *shrinks a little away, looking over the parapet*] Shouldn't be surprised if it was all exaggerated. They bundled us up in such a hurry. [*To the* YOUNG MAN] Shall we go down and see?

MRS B. You'll do nothing of the kind, Tom.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Aside*] Tony, don't leave me!

YOUNG MAN. All right, darling.

MR B. They're always having fires in Paris. It's an inflammable place.

BRYN. [*Suddenly*] Di, we *must* go down and see about Mum and Dad.

MRS B. No, my dears, you'll just stay here.

BRYN. But suppose something's happened to them. Oh! here's somebody coming!

They go towards the trap.

FROBA *emerges, violin under one arm and a bag in the other hand.*

Did you see my father and mother?

DIANA. Yes, did you?

FROBA. No one passed up to my floor. I judge dey're still below.

MR B. Got your fiddle I see, Sir.

FROBA. I sure have. Say, is dere no fire escape up here?

MR B. Not a sign of one.

FROBA. Noting between our souls and de stars.

BRYN. [*Suddenly*] Have you been in a fire before?

FROBA. Sure!

BRYN. Oh! do tell us.

MRS B. Don't do anything of the sort.

FROBA *passes on, to the parapet, and looks over.*

MR B. [*Gazing at the side walls*] Looks to me as if we were in a trap up here.

MRS B. Don't talk like that, Tom—the children!

BRYN. Oh! It's awful!

YOUNG MAN. I'll go down and see.

The YOUNG WOMAN *puts out her hand as if to keep him.*

DIANA. Oh! would you?

BRYN. [*Who is at the trap*] Oh! Di! There's Mum! She's fainting. Nurse and Gustave have got her all stretched out. They can't get her up! And where's Dad?

YOUNG MAN. Nell?

YOUNG WOMAN. Yes, go!

He slips down the trap.

They all gather round the trap.

MR B. [*Directing into the aperture*] That's right! Get her under the arms! Good! Don't let her slip! Capital! She's coming!

MRS B. Don't fuss, Tom!

The YOUNG MAN *is slowly emerging with* MRS LENNOX *clasped to him.* DIANA *and* BRYN *tug under his arms, and he lands his burden and stands breathless,* GUSTAVE *following up, holding* MRS LENNOX'S *feet.*

DIANA *and* BRYN. [*Hanging over their motionless* MOTHER] Mum! Mum!

MRS B. [*At her dressing-case*] Here! Wait! I've got some sal volatile.

MR B. Bend her head down! Tickle her feet! Pinch her!

The NURSE *emerges from the trap,* GUSTAVE *assisting her.*

GUSTAVE. A leetle brandy—I get it—'ave a leetle in my room—veree old.

NURSE. No, no, Gustave! Nothing better than sal volatile. [*She takes it from* MRS BEETON *and administers it.* GUSTAVE *stands hovering over the scene.*]

DIANA. Where's Dad, Nurse?

NURSE. H'ssh! Don't—your mother——

BRYN. But why did she faint? Mum never faints.

DIANA. [*Beginning to realise*] Nurse! Dad?

NURSE. 'Ssh! Look, she's coming to. Don't think of yourselves. Think of her!

MRS LENNOX *is regaining consciousness. The* CHILDREN *gaze at her face. The others have withdrawn a little, except the* NURSE, *who holds her head.*

BRYN. [*Timidly*] We're here, Mum.

MRS L. Where am I? Where——?

DIANA. On the roof, Mum. We're quite safe—only where's——? [*Checks herself.*]

BRYN. Is Dad coming?

MRS LENNOX *looks at one* CHILD *and the other, and shakes her head, staring before her.* DIANA *throws herself down into her lap, with a choked "Oh! Mum!"*

BRYN. [*Frozen*] Why?

MRS L. [*Very quietly over* DIANA'S *head*] Dad is dead.

BRYN. Oh-h-h! [*Her face breaks up, and then she doesn't cry.*]

MRS B. [*With a rapid movement circling her with an arm*] Brave child! Brave child! There, there! That's right! Don't cry!

DIANA. [*Wrenching free, on her knees*] Mum, how?

NURSE. His heart, dear.

GUSTAVE. Courage, Madame.

MRS L. Help me up.

GUSTAVE. [*Helping her*] A so brave ladee.

The NURSE *and* CHILDREN *gather round her.* BRICE *emerges from the trap and shrinks apart.*

GUSTAVE. [*Going up to the* BEETONS, *Centre*] You 'ave everything you weesh, Madame? [*To* BEETON] De roof veree nice, veree flat, Sare.

MR B. How are we going to get off the damned thing. We're not birds.

GUSTAVE. No, Sare [*Glancing at* MRS BEETON], but angels.

MRS B. What's that?

GUSTAVE. Excuse, Madame! De pompiers soon come, den we fly. I go now find de oder gentlemen. [*To the* YOUNG COUPLE] I fetch you something, Madame?

YOUNG WOMAN. No, no, thanks! I'm all right! You're not going down again?

GUSTAVE. Oh! Yes, Madame; my dutee, I in charge.

Young FANNING *appears, stands dazedly, then turns to the parapet.* GUSTAVE *goes down.*

YOUNG MAN. Young Fanning! Keep your face turned, Nell.

She turns, shrouded in her scarf; and he moves towards FANNING.

YOUNG MAN. Hallo, Fanning!

FANNING. Oh! Hallo! I say, this is seeing "life," what!

YOUNG MAN. [*Low*] Seeing death. [*Pointing to the* CHILDREN *and their* MOTHER] Their father's dead —heart failure.

FANNING. I say!

BAKER'S *head emerges and he comes up the trap, followed by* MOULTENEY.

BAKER. Where's the old waiter, Major?

BRICE *turns sharply round.*

MOULTENEY. By George, isn't he here? The flames are pretty well up to the second floor.

NURSE. [*Who has approached*] He must have gone back to Mr Lennox.

MOULTENEY. What! Somebody else down there still?

NURSE. Dead—his heart failed. That poor lady!

MRS LENNOX *comes rushing up to them.*

MRS L. Nurse! Sir! I must—I can't let him stay down there.

BAKER. Steady, Ma'am! Of course not! We'll get him. Here, four of us! Who?

All cluster round.

Reggie, you! I. [*To the* YOUNG MAN] You!

YOUNG MAN. Rather! [*Turning back to the* YOUNG WOMAN] I must, Nell. I must.

BAKER *and the* MAJOR *are restraining* MRS LENNOX.

YOUNG WOMAN. Of course! [*She suddenly frees her face.*]

The YOUNG MAN *runs back to the trap and goes down.*

BAKER. Down you go, Reggie! [FANNING *descends*] Major! Right!

MR B. [*Pushing forward*] Look here! I— —

MOULTENEY. No, Sir. The younger men.

MR B. What! What are *you*, if it comes to that?

BRICE. [*Pushing suddenly between them*] Get out of the way! [*He descends.*

BAKER. [*Barring the way to the elder men*] Now, Major, you and our friend look after the ladies. We'll get him. Right! [*He descends.*

MR B. Look here! I don't get any show. What!

MRS B. [*Taking his arm*] Tom, don't be foolish!

MR B. Damn!

MRS LENNOX *turns up, covering her face with her hands. A hush has fallen.* FROBA *has gone back to the parapet. The* NURSE *stands beside* MRS LENNOX *and* DIANA *is close to them.* MR *and* MRS BEETON *and the* MAJOR, *not far from them, are talking in low tones. The* YOUNG WOMAN *stands by herself forward on the Right close to the trap.*

FROBA. [*Coming up to her from the parapet*] Now's de time to tink of our sins, Madam.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Startled*] I beg your pardon.

FROBA. My nerve's kind of going. Look! [*He points*] Say! Dere's beauty in flames! But when dey come near. [*Shudders. She covers her eyes*] You been in a fire, too, I guess.

YOUNG WOMAN. Yes.

FROBA. It sure rips the skin off your soul.

YOUNG WOMAN. It's horrible—so cruel.

FROBA. Aye! What can you put against it. Say, d'you tink dat poor lady'd mind if I play my fiddle.

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Impatient*] No, play if you want to. Play! [*As he recoils towards his violin, to herself*] Tony!

BRYN *steals up to her and peers into the trap.*

BRYN. Oh! Isn't it hot? D'you think it's dangerous now?

YOUNG WOMAN. Yes.

BRYN. Dad wouldn't like them to risk their lives for him, now he's dead. [*She covers her face with her arm, and the* YOUNG WOMAN *puts an arm round her. In a choked voice*] He was such a darling. [*Freeing her face and shaking her head*] He'd much rather be left there. I know he would.

YOUNG WOMAN. But your mother, dear.

FROBA *begins to play his muted violin.*

BRYN. Oh! Dad! [*The* YOUNG WOMAN *strokes the top of her head. Brokenly*] Nasty stuffy coffin! [*Trying to break away*] I want to go down.

YOUNG WOMAN. No, no, no! You might easily make one of them lose his life.

BRYN. Isn't it awful! We were having such a gorgeous time. And so were you I expect.

MR B. [*Voice suddenly raised*] These confounded old French houses—all wood, and no fire extinguishers. They ought to be prosecuted. Some paraffin left about, I'll bet.

BRYN. Suppose it all fell in! And they were killed!

YOUNG WOMAN. Don't!

BRYN. [*With a gesture towards* FROBA] I wish he wouldn't, I'm going to cry.

YOUNG WOMAN. Cry, dear! You'll feel better.

BRYN. [*Suddenly slipping down and kneeling at the trap*] Listen!

BAKER'S *voice is heard.*

BAKER. Right!

BRYN. [*Excitedly*] They're coming! [*Recoiling*] Oh! I don't want to see!

YOUNG WOMAN. [*Drawing her away*] No! There, there! Tuck your head into me. [*She stands looking over the child's buried face.*]

BRYN. [*In a smothered voice*] I feel—I feel all grown-up!

DIANA *and all, save* MRS LENNOX *and the* NURSE, *are gathered round the trap.* BAKER *emerges. He looks up at* MRS LENNOX, *who covers her face and turns away.*

MOULTENEY. Well?

BAKER. Too late. That floor's blazing.

The YOUNG MAN *emerges; then* FANNING *and* BRICE, *of whom the last steals away again to the parapet.*

MOULTENEY [*To Fanning*]. Anything wrong, old chap?

FANNING. Caught my sleeve. It's nothing, Major.

BRICE. Stop that damn noise.

FROBA. Say, Mister—is de fire gaining?

BRICE. Oh! Go to hell!

FROBA. No need to go, I guess. We got it right here.

A dead silence.

MR B. [*Coming up*] Pretty bad down there, what! Where are those damned pompeers? Are they goin' to let us roast up here. Phew! It's coming up now. [*He recoils from the heat emerging.*]

They all turn to the parapet.

MOULTENEY. [*Calling to* BRICE] Any of them there?

BRICE. Not a blasted sign!

BAKER. Come and shout!

He and FANNING *join* BRICE, *and all of them begin shouting:* "*Ladders, ladders, échelles, ladders!*" *All are at the parapet now except* MRS LENNOX, *and the* YOUNG MAN *and* WOMAN, *who have been standing close together silent.*

YOUNG WOMAN. [*As the shouting stops*] Tony, if we get away, I'm coming—for good.

"*Ladders.*"

YOUNG MAN. You are, Nell? You are! The fire was worth it then.

DIANA. [*From the parapet*] Look! There they are! Look!

"Ladders. We want ladders!" The shouting goes up once more, and then stops altogether.

MR B. [*Shouting down over the parapet*] No, put 'em *there*! The French are hopeless.

FANNING. [*Turning and suddenly coming on the couple, who are approaching the parapet*] Why! Why, it's Mrs Charles!

YOUNG WOMAN. It *was* Mrs Charles, Reggie.

YOUNG MAN. Yes, Fanning. This lady is going to be *my* wife in future.

FANNING. Oh! Quite! I see. Yes! Of course! Yes! [*Still absorbed by the awkwardness of the meeting*] Do you think we shall get down in time? I say! Look there! [*Smoke is rising from the trap*] Hadn't we better shut that? It makes a draught, you know.

He and the YOUNG MAN *close the trap door.*

BAKER. [*At the parapet*] Here come the chutes! Up—up—up—up!

FANNING, *running to the parapet, joins in the shout.*

MOULTENEY. [*Taking charge*] Now, please, all—steady! In order—ready. [*To* BRYN] You, child, [*To* DIANA] and you. Then you, Mrs Lennox, and you, Mrs Beeton. Please line up here, and don't waste time!

Two POMPIERS, *one after the other, appear over the parapet.*

MOULTENEY. Now, child, into the chute.

BRYN. No! Di and Mum!

MOULTENEY. Do as you're told. Baker, you and Brice get over and help with the chutes.

BAKER *and* BRICE *climb over to work with the* POMPIERS.

MRS B. [*While* BRYN *is being handed down, followed by* DIANA *and* MRS LENNOX] I'm not going without you, Tom.

MR B. Stuff! Don't be silly!

MRS B. Couldn't they put us in together?

MOULTENEY. [*To* MRS BEETON] Come along, Mrs Beeton.

MRS B. No, I prefer to wait with my husband.

MOULTENEY. Come, you're only keeping us. [*As she holds back, looking round*] Very well. Nurse! Down you go.

The NURSE *goes over and down.*

[*To* MRS BEETON, *clinging to* BEETON] Now, Mrs Beeton.

BAKER *and he seize her and put her over the edge.*

MRS B. [*As she goes over*] Tom, you're to come next. D'you hear me! No! Don't contradict! [*With an agonised*] Tom! [*She disappears.*

BAKER. [*To* BEETON] Now, Sir. Race her down!

MR B. There's another lady! What!

YOUNG WOMAN. [*From where she has been standing clinging to the* YOUNG MAN *and half hidden*] Please go, I'm all right.

YOUNG MAN. Nell!

YOUNG WOMAN. No. [*Clings to him.*]

MR B. Ladies first! Here, I say——!

MOULTENEY. Over you get, Sir. Shove him over!

FANNING, BRICE *and* BAKER *shove* MR BEETON *over, protesting.*

MR B. Well, I'm dashed! It's most irregular——

[*Disappears.*

MOULTENEY. [*At the other chute*] Ready here! [*To the* YOUNG MAN] Bring her, please.

The YOUNG MAN *lifts the* YOUNG WOMAN *and carries her to the chute. She turns her head to him, and her face is seen pale, straining to his; then she too vanishes over the edge.*

BAKER. [*Above the parapet*] Now you, Sir, with the hair. Got your fiddle? Right!

FROBA. What about you oder guys?

BAKER. Get on!

FROBA *goes over into the other chute.*

YOUNG MAN. [*Leaning over*] Thank God! She's down.

BAKER. [*His head and thrown-up hands appearing above parapet*] By Gad! that chute's gone! Only one in action now, Major. Who's next? Good Lord! This has caught fire. We must just wait.

He and BRICE *climb back, and the five* MEN *wait, clustered at the parapet.*

MOULTENEY. How did this damned fire start? [BRICE *makes as if to speak and checks himself*] Do you know?

BRICE. [*Sullenly*] How should I know?

MOULTENEY. Well, do you—that's the point?

BRICE. [*Defiant*] Yes. It was a joke on the old waiter.

MOULTENEY. Good God! You lit it!

BRICE. The old chap cheeked me. I saw a bottle of paraffin on the table in his den and his hat at the other end, and I laid a train to the hat and set a match to it. The flames must have run back to the bottle and burst it. It was just a joke. [*He looks at their blank faces with a sort of appeal*] Don't give me away to the French.

FANNING. Of course, we shan't give you away.

BAKER. [*Suddenly*] Look out, Major! They've got that chute right again.

MOULTENEY. Reggie! You next.

FANNING. No, Major! Elders.

MOULTENEY. [*Quietly*] On the contrary, my boy—this isn't a war.

The head of one of the POMPIERS *appears.*

FANNING. I say, Mr Baker—make him!

MOULTENEY. [*To the* YOUNG MAN] Come on then, Sir! You next [*As the* YOUNG MAN *holds back*].

BAKER. Lovers first! You owe it to the lady. Come on! Over you go. [*The* YOUNG MAN *goes over*] Right! Now, Major, don't let's have any fuss—your turn.

MOULTENEY. Let's send the old waiter down. Gustave! Where is he?

BAKER. [*Looking round*] Good God! Hasn't he come up again?

BRICE. What!

BAKER. Here! Get that trap open.

He and BRICE *spring to the trap and wrench it off.*

BAKER. By God! He must be suffocated—it's hot as hell! Gustave!

FANNING. [*Agonised*] Gustave!

BAKER. What's to be done, Major? Can't let the poor old boy——

MOULTENEY. Steady! To go down is certain death! Call him! [*They call: "Gustave!"*

BAKER. He must be lying there!

FANNING. Major, it's up to us. We must get him. Think if he's lying there; such a frightfully decent old chap! I'll go!

MOULTENEY. Stop him, Baker!

BAKER *seizes him.*

FANNING. Let go, Mr Baker. Give me a chance.

BAKER *holds on.*

BRICE. I'm going [*Pushing* BAKER *aside*] To hell with you! This is my shoot.

He disappears headlong down the trap.

BAKER. That's put the lid on. What now?

The POMPIERS *appear on the parapet.*

Here are these fellows again!

A POMPIER. Venez, Messieurs, venez. Vite!

MOULTENEY. Now, Reggie! Here, take him—he isn't safe!

FANNING. I call it rotten—you won't let me play the game.

MOULTENEY. You have, my son.

FANNING. Let go! Major, make them. It's like deserting while those two are still down there. Let me go down to them.

MOULTENEY. No, Reggie—first duty of a soldier is to obey orders. Now!

FANNING. [*After a look*] All right, Major.

He goes of his own accord.

BAKER. That boy's made good! What about it, Major?

MOULTENEY. One or other of us. No good both staying. You go.

BAKER. [*Spinning a coin and calling*] Heads! Tails! Your shot.

The MAJOR *climbs over and goes down the chute.*

POMPIERS. [*To* BAKER] Venez, Monsieur, venez!

BAKER. [*Pointing wildly*] Still below there! [*He looks down the trap, shading his eyes*] Brice! Brice!

The POMPIERS *approach and seize him.*

BAKER. Get out! Damn it! Can't leave my friend. [*He breaks from them and calls down the trap*] Brice!

POMPIER. Venez, Monsieur—rien à faire—vous nous perdrez tous!

A drift of smoke comes up. They seize BAKER, *run him up to the parapet and force him over.*

A cheer rises from below. During this the smoke issuing from the trap has cleared for a moment, and BRICE *is seen on the steps leading to the trap painfully thrusting* GUSTAVE *up so that his head and half his body are visible lying in the mouth of the trap.*

BRICE. [*Gasping*] There you are, old sport—blast you! That's quits. God! I'm all in.

He reels and slips back down the steps.

A POMPIER *has turned from the parapet. He sees* GUSTAVE.

POMPIER. Ah! le voilà. Voyez, Jacques!

They rush to GUSTAVE, *lift him and carry him to the parapet.*

1ST POMPIER. Il est foutu.

2ND POMPIER. [*Feeling his heart and lips*] Non, non, non! Il vit, il vit.

GUSTAVE. [*Recovering consciousness and looking round*] Un Monsieur—Un Monsieur Anglais! [*Pointing to the trap*] La bas—Vite! [*He tries to escape from them and go back. Wildly*] 'E save me. [*He collapses.*]

POMPIERS. Voyons—voyons!

They lift him over the parapet. A cheer rises from below and another as GUSTAVE *is lowered down. The* POMPIERS *reappear and go towards the trap.*

1ST POMPIER. [*At the top, calling*] Monsieur! Hé! La bas!

2ND POMPIER. Faut descendre!

He tries to go down the steps but is driven back by a blast of smoke and heat. Reappearing, gasping

C'est impossible! Doit être mort!

The 1ST POMPIER *tries, but is also driven back.*

2ND POMPIER. Fini! [*He sees the cat at the end of the parapet*] Ah! V'la le chat! Prenez le! Pincez le bougre!

The 1ST POMPIER *seizes the cat.*

2ND POMPIER. [*At the parapet*] Vite Jacques, vite!

They disappear over the parapet.

A cry of "Oh! La!" A second shrill cheer. A glare and a flurry of water. Then in the smoke BRICE *is seen emerging from the trap. He sways, suffocated, reels forward and subsides against the parapet. A spurt of flame shoots forth from the trap. He raises himself, looks over and round him and calls wildly. Smoke drifts over the parapet. With a groan and a despairing gesture he climbs on to the parapet.*

BRICE. Christ! I'm done for! Up—up—up!

And falls down into the drifting smoke.

CURTAIN.

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